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WAR!

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In this Issue

Editorial 2

Why did the Three Rings lose their powers? 4

Gondorian Warcraft 9

Eldacar must die! 16

The House of Warcraft 12

Dúnadan longevity 26

Supplement: Armies of Eriador

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NEXT ISSUE:
WILDERLAND

EDITORIAL

What is it good for?

War? Quite a bit, actually, if you're a gamer. Among other things, war generates change, which is an engine for plot and character development. It creates an environment where the motive (or necessity) for leaving behind everyday existence is abundant. When I think of time periods in which I have set or would like to set Middle-earth campaigns—the Fall of Eregion, the Last Alliance, Angmar, the Kin-strife, the Corsairs, the Long Winter, the War of the Ring—all are marked by military conflict.

But were I then to consult one of the MERP modules on how to manage or represent the details of warfare in a given time and locale, I might find I had a lot of work to do. Sure, military organization and tactics have always been a part of MERP's world-building project, but there is much still to be said. I speak here only of MERP, since we are still standing in that interim period, before Decipher and Games Workshop have unveiled their promised Lord of the Rings product lines.

Games Workshop will certainly be providing us with some practical rules for waging war in Middle-earth. Yet I wonder whether the depth of research and attention to detail we can expect from these industry products will equal the caliber of the essays featured in this issue of OH.

Lance Blyth was one of the authors lined up for the abortive *Northern Gondor* realm module project. As Lance was a military historian by trade, I was excited to get someone on the dream team who could bring a very specialized expertise and tactical sensibility to the topic of Gondorian warcraft. Lance's particular interest lay in the micro-order of battle lines and tactical formations, a valuable balancing perspective to the usually more abstract presentations that had appeared in MERP to date. Regrettably, the project never got off the ground. But I held onto Lance's notes and eventually tracked him down via the Internet, inviting him to put his ideas into writing so that others might benefit from them.

Thomas Morwinsky's essays on the military forces of Eriador might seem to be re-tracing the already quite extensive exposition Wes Frank has given us in the *Arnor* modules, but in fact much of the ground they cover is essentially new. Thomas' overarching interest is logistics (the social, material and demographic resources necessary for war to be waged and sustained). This is a vital game design issue—even if one is not particular interested in military matters—because it invokes a fundamental axiom of any realistic fantasy world: in order to believe and interact with an imaginary environment, both GM and players need to understand *how* and *why* it works the way it does.

Naturally, as with every other visualization of Middle-earth, Lance and Thomas' construals of Dúnadan warcraft are based on a dialogue between the primary sources and their own extrapolations from general historical models of how military

institutions arise and develop. A major element in both of their essays is the feudal model which they assume as the basis of Númenórean martial tradition. Other models are no doubt possible. It is hoped that their rigorous analyses will encourage further discussion and refinement.

So much for war. How about magic? This issue's magic feature is a speculative exploration of the implied magical principles operative in the creation and eventual disempowerment of the Elven-rings. In the course of his argument, Charles Bouldin invokes some of the key concepts that dominate Tolkien's own speculative writings on Middle-earth. Maybe this will inspire someone to take the next step: turning these ideas into game mechanics.

Which brings me to a question I'm sure you all have been dwelling on as well. Now that there's a new Middle-earth game system on the horizon, will we continue to use MERP/ Rolemaster rules in our own campaigns? The question is premature, of course, since Decipher's *Lord of the Rings Role Playing Game* has not yet become a reality, but it's still worth thinking about.

Other Hands, for its part, remains committed to ecumenism: all game systems as applied to Middle-earth are welcome in these pages. Nonetheless, it may be desirable to encourage contributors to use one particular kind of mechanics as the "default setting." Thus the issue: should we continue to operate as a "MERP-preferred" magazine, or do we hop on the Decipher bandwagon? Think about it, and let me know your thoughts.

Remember the *Kin-Strife* module? Where were *you* in '95? Well, the prolific Eric Dubourg was there, and he's still there now, delivering us yet another web of intrigue from that intriguing period of Gondor's history. Set at the tale-end of Castamir's reign, "Eldacar must die!" provides GMs with a convenient means of getting their players from the heart of the Usurper's power to the exiled Eldacar in Rhovanion on the verge of his campaign of reconquest. Check it out.

And then there were those two pesky extra pages that needed to be filled with something. I had a little piece of my own I had been working on recently, and the size was just right. My topic is Dúnadan longevity and how it can be calculated for non-royals (e.g., PCs) at different time periods. It's long been high time someone tabulated the information on longevity Tolkien devised for the Dúnadan rulers of the Third Age (published in HoMe XII), so here it is. I think you'll find the results quite interesting.

Oh yes, I almost forgot to mention this issue's Mithril centerfold. Why am I so obsessed with Chris Tubb's Far Harad range? Well, it's really cool, for one thing. And it has guys fighting each other with scimitars in the "House of Warcraft." It was a coincidence too good to pass up. I can just imagine Klú Relortin in the background whispering "Flawless victory." MERP Kombat! Fight!

See you in line on December 19th...

Chris Seeman
July 1st, 2001

WHY DID THE THREE RINGS LOSE THEIR POWRS?

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When Celebrimbor fashioned the Three Elven Rings, he did so without the admittance or the presence of Sauron, solely employing knowledge which he himself had learned. Elven artifacts which were crafted both previous and subsequent to this time kept their potency into the Fourth Age.[1] *Why, then, were the powers of the Three dispelled when the One Ring was unmade?*

First, some background. The Changing of the World resulting from the War of Wrath was painfully fresh in the minds of the Eldar; they wanted to preserve the beauty that was fading from Middle-earth. In furtherance of this desire to heal and restore, the Elves found a powerful ally in Annatar (the fair-seeming guise which Sauron had adopted in order to subvert the Noldorin realms of Lindon and Eregion, the only major obstacles to his domination of Middle-earth).[2]

Sauron perceived Lindon as a threat because it was the sole bastion of Elven might from Beleriand before the Changing of the World. He did not know what all was stockpiled there, nor what caliber of Elves lived there. Lindon's deep harborage and key natural resources also made it strategic in its own right. But Gil-galad denied Annatar admission into Lindon—whether out of Noldorin pride, or from wisdom and insight which, though inarticulate, perhaps resulted from the promptings of the West, particularly Ulmo.

Eregion, on the other hand, was a new, growing, extroverted community, exchanging goods, services and knowledge with others, particularly the Longbeards of Moria. Celebrimbor (in certain lines of Tolkien's writings) convinced the Elves of Eregion to accept his leadership in preference to that of Galadriel and Celeborn. Surprisingly—and despite being a Noldo, or perhaps because of recent history—Celebrimbor was more interested in and receptive to purported assistance from the Valar. Annatar, perceiving Celebrimbor's Noldorin desire to preserve Elvendom in Middle-earth, offered him and his smiths a medium through which various Elvish powers could be amplified. He taught the Gwaith-i-Mírdain how to halt the devolution of things.[3]

This knowledge must have been sufficiently arcane to mask the fact that anything made by means of it would become subservient to refined Morgothian elements (in ring-shape) when *fea* was instilled therein.[4] According to Sauron's design, once the One Ring was created, the other rings would retain power only as long as it existed. When the One was unmade into its constituent molecules, the others "short-circuited," diffusing their powers beyond use.[5] They became mere heirlooms, of great worth to some because of their symbology and craftsmanship, but irretrievably short-circuited.[6]

It is a reasonable inference that Sauron's Ring-lore combined his knowledge as a disciple of Aulë with his learnings under Morgoth. Therefore, his gift of knowledge to Celebrimbor served as a "glue," a way of marrying the Morgoth element in all of Arda to Aule's contributions.[7] In his instruction of the Gwaith-i-Mírdain, Sauron may have identified Aulë as the provenance of the "preservation" and "stabilization" he taught as the binding principles of Ring-lore.[8] Even if he did not specifically name Aulë, Annatar did claim to be an emissary of the Valar.

But in the craft of Ring-making, Sauron was a student as well as a teacher. Because of the inherently limited scope of Morgothian knowledge, wholly occupied as it was with perversion and domination rather than creation and innovation, Sauron would have desired to learn things known only to the Noldor—as much to graft new techniques onto his own craft as to subvert and subjugate the Elves.

One feature of the Rings which may have derived from this lore was their gemstones: "The Nine, the Seven, and the Three...had each their proper gem (FotR.265)." It may be that Celebrimbor had discovered that certain stones, if magically enhanced, could focus certain powers, and that these focused aspects could be transmitted when brought into contact with a person.

Whatever the Elven component may have been, the fundamental nature of the Rings derived from Sauron's knowledge, gained from his own unique blend of Aulëan and Morgothian-derived knowledge and power, so that any product of that knowledge necessarily alloyed motives both pure and corrupt (the latter, of course, not being readily apparent).[9]

This inference (i.e., that the scope of an artifact's powers is shaped by the nature of its source/s) raises interesting possibilities for interpreting other artifacts in Tolkien's *legendarium*. Consider, for example, the swords Eöl forged from meteoric ore. Because meteors come from outside of Arda, such ore could conceivably be free of the taint of Melkor. This ore, like the Secondborn, would be a completely free agent. A weapon forged from such material would be effective against any Vala or Maia in corporeal form, and might have *"fea"* characteristics of its own, enabling it to affect beings not enrobed in a *hröa*. This notion could help to account for the prophecy that Turin would return at the End of Time with his black sword and slay Morgoth (who would finally manage to re-entered Arda).[10]

Does such an hypothesis credit the Elves with too much sophistication? Support for it might come from the following facts: 1) the Noldor learned at the feet of Aulë; 2) they re-

searched and developed ideas of their own for several ages; 3) Feanor created the Palantíri, the Silmarils, other gems which radiated light and beauty, weapons and armor; and 4) the Elves of Ost-in-Edhil swapped information on smithing techniques with the Longbeards of Khazad-dûm.

When Annatar showed up offering knowledge, purportedly on behalf of the Valar, I doubt that Celebrimbor *et alia* accepted the gift merely on faith, given their history of interaction with the Valar and with Morgoth. The books mentioned that they crafted trifling rings as mere essays in the craft. I find this to indicate that they were experimenting with the knowledge given to see what was possible and what the limits were.

But if the Mírdain were engaging in such experimentation, how did Sauron prevent them from contemplating the possibility that the rings could be made vulnerable to a master ring? I suggest that the Noldor, despite all their experimentation and lore, would never have contemplated such an unnatural act prior to Sauron's forging of the One, because they would have regarded the act of wrenching away part of one's own *fëa* and imprisoning it in a ring that "hid" the power of mastery—as distinct from the mere refinement of existing substances (such as gems)—as an alien perversion of the natural order.

To return to the problem of the relation of the One Ring to the others, how could the creation of the One "mastering" ring impose bonds from a distance, unless one posits that any such artifact would be able to master non *fëa*-imbued rings?

I take Sauron's spell literally: *"One* Ring to rule them all, *One* Ring to find them, *One* Ring to bring them all and in the Darkness bind them." I disagree with those who say that Sauron "tied their powers together," and also with the claim that the One had gained mastery over the Three. Sauron worked to bring the Seven under his physical control (at least those that had not been consumed by dragon-fire). If via the One Ring he already had mastery over those rings, why collect them? It would be better to leave them to roam Arda to tempt and to corrupt.

Further, Celebrimbor heard the bespelling of the One Ring, comprehended its import, and then took off the rings; this despite the One Ring being created and whole. It seems that the One Ring gave the wearer (you could also say wielder) the ability to perceive the Three and to pervert the Three's powers, but it did not give the wielder the ability to master the wearers nor proxy their powers from afar.[11] Sauron wanted to have those rings on his person, to wield and subjugate to his will.

Notes

1. Prior to Annatar's advent, Celebrimbor had crafted other beautiful things, from the Elf-stone (following certain lines of Tolkien's work) which he gave to Galadriel, to the joint work performed with the Longbeards; e.g., the Western Gates of Khazad-dûm. These works, not being tainted by Annatar's gifts, retained their abilities after the destruction of the One Ring. These things were tied to knowledge derived from Aule, combined with Elvish invention or subcreation.
2. Dismissing the Elven realms of Rhovanion as strategically insignificant—perhaps as much from the absence of large contingents of Noldor and Sindar as for their location), seeing in Lindon and Eregion.
3. Probably presented as shielding against corruption.
4. When one amputates a portion of one's *fëa* and infuses it into the molecules of an external object, the resulting artifact would amplify one's power by focusing it.
5. Would this apply to Saruman's ring? Sauron must have rewarded Saruman with some portion of Ring-making lore. I say "must" because, by the Third Age, all Elves who had acquired the skill had either been captured or slain by Sauron during the sack of Ost-in-Edhil (or had fled, either sailing West or taking up residence in Imladris or Lindon). The knowledge which I propose was given to Saruman via the *palantír* would have been a trap, and, as such, a ring made by Saruman would have been subject to the same rules which bound the others.
6. Thus, Elrond, Galadriel and Gandalf openly wore them on their trip to Mithlond.
7. Remember that during the primeval formation of the world, Melkor and Aulë both shaped various elemental substances. During the First War, the Valar strove with Melkor for mastery—and temporarily lost! Though not the victor in that conflict, Aulë labored mightily (and secretly) to place special things in Arda; gems and *mithril* and veins of other ore.
8. An axiom of propaganda is to wrap a lie in the truth and then tell it widely and loudly enough times that the statement becomes pervasive.
9. Perhaps this is the reason Gandalf made his comments about trifling rings: that, though mere essays in the craft, they were still very hazardous (from their Morgothian aspect) to any mortal. Interestingly enough, the Dwarven-rings could not bind the will of their wearers to the wielder of the One. It would seem that Sauron miscalculated the reach of his lore (and that of the Elves); the Dwarven-rings only exacerbated a Dwarf's desire for treasure. Perhaps this was because some of Sauron's knowledge came from Aulë, creator of the Dwarves, and thus could but amplify existing traits; or perhaps Aulë's children could only be tempted within prescribed bounds.
10. Imagine what would have resulted from a musical instrument made of this (a flute or a horn), or an implement of worship or learning.
11. Note Celebrimbor's powers while wearing the Three. He actually heard the fateful words that completed the creation of the One Ring: "Ash nazg durbatuluk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatuluk, agh burzum-ishi krimpatul." He thus comprehended the error of his prideful actions, removed the Three from his hand, and undertook immediate steps to protect them. Were Sauron to obtain them, he would have control over the Elven aspects which he, by nature, was unable to dominate—discernment of truth and error (and thus the ability to cloud the judgment of others), kindling of the spirit (and its antithesis), and maybe healing (ditto), etc.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to express special thanks to David Rice, James Gutt and G.R. Mead II.

GONDORIAN WARCRAFT

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Disclaimer: I am not a Tolkien scholar, nor am I completely familiar with the MERP canon aS established by ICE. But to make a starting point for a discussion of Gondorian warcraft I have relied upon, in the main, the stories "The Disaster of the Gladden Fields" and "Orion and Eorl" in Unfinished Tales, *and the chapters "Minas Tirith" and "The Black Gate Opens" in* The Return of the King.

What follows then is, it must be emphasized, one view of warfare in Gondor during the Third Age. While it may contradict other views, it is meant to be as close as possible to what Tolkien wrote. My deepest hope is that it provides us a place from which to start considering warcraft in Middle-earth.

The Ohtar

The heart of Gondorian warcraft was the *ohtar* (Q. "warrior," pl. *ohtari*). Serving in his *hîr's* (S. "warleader," pl. *hírath) boronas* (S. "warband;" pl. *berenais)* in the *dagorwaith* (S. "host") of the king or steward, the *ohtar* won battles against incredible odds, campaigned in foreign lands, and defended his own shores and borders for over three thousand years.

The *ohtar* came from the prosperous and numerous agricultural freeman class of Gondor. Originally of pure Dúnadan stock, more and more mixed-blooded Gondorians served over time. Every five households were required by custom, tradition and law to provide one man to muster for military service when called by the local *hîr* at the king's command. Since the same individual usually served over and over again, *ohtari* tended to be experienced and well-trained.

Training, when not mustered, took place at least once every season. These sessions, sometimes called 'weapon-takes,' lasted two to three days and took place under the guidance of the local *hîr's* full-time warriors, the *roqueni* (Q. "knights," sing. *roquen)*. An *ohtar* trained with the spear, *eket* (shortsword) and steel bow, wore body-mail, a conical helm (often decorated with the gull-wings of Gondor) and carried an oval shield (UT.273, 276, 284 n.28). The weapons and armor were the property of the crown, made by the Royal Guild of Weaponsmiths, and stored in armories at havens and fortresses or in the *hîr's* hall when not in use.

On campaign, *ohtari* carried two days' rations, a 'need-wallet' of emergency supplies, a personal kit, a sleeping bag and spare clothes. One baggage pony per 20 men was typically furnished to carry extra supplies (UT.276, 279 n.8). While mustered for war, *ohtari* received a royal stipend of coins, rations and materials through the *hîr*.

When not mustered for war or training, an *ohtar* was to be supported by the five households he was recruited from, allowing him to continue his training. *Ohtari* and their families often farmed their own lands and served as key men in their communities, due to their access to the local structures of governance.

The *roqueni* who led and trained the *ohtari* were full-time, professional warriors maintained by the *hírath* as personal retainers, estate managers or officials during times of peace. *Roqueni* were semi-hereditary, for their sons had to serve first as *ohtari,* proving themselves before ascending to their fathers' positions. An especially valiant or competent *ohtar* could expect to be made a *roquen* (UT.282, n.17). *Roqueni* used the same arms and armor as the *ohtari,* but of finer quality and with the addition of a *macil* (a greatsword, often considered the symbol of their rank) and round shield with their own personal symbol (UT.276).

In contrast to the *ohtar,* a *roquen* received support from his *hîr* even while not mustered for a campaign (through a salary, by a bequest of lands, or by living in the *hîr's* household). During times of war, the Crown provided a stipend to each *roquen* (as it did to each *ohtar,* but of greater quantity and quality).

The Warband

Ohtari and *roqueni* served their *hîr* in his *boronas* (S. "warband," pl. *berenais),* the basic unit of Gondorian warcraft. The strength of a *boronas* typically consisted of several hundred men (usually 200-500). Some *berenais,* especially those of kings or princes, could be over 1000 strong, though numbers often were less during a long campaign (UT.271).

Each *boronas* was led by a *hîr* (or his kin) who had received lands from the king for the express purpose of providing his *boronas* whenever the king demanded it. Each *roquen* typically led 20 *ohtari* in order to provide the internal articulation needed to perform battlefield maneuvers (UT.271-272). The spear and shield dominated the armament of the *boronas,* but normally only 1 bow was carried per 20 men. When on detached service or serving on a ship, a *boronas* carried 1 bow for every 5 men; when serving in a fortress, every *ohtar* had a bow (UT.273, 278 n.22).

The *boronas* practiced two basic tactical formations: the *thangail* (S. "shield wall") and the *dírnaith* (S. "spearhead") (UT.272, 281-282 n.16). The *thangail* was a defensive formation, meant to get as many spear points forward as possible. Typically, each *roquen* arrayed his *ohtari* in two lines, with himself in the center of the front line and any archers in the second. If terrain allowed, the *ohtari in* the first line could plant their spears and use their *eketi.* The second line would then fight over their sword-arms with spears. Normally the entire

***Thangail* formation**

I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Rs I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Os I Rs
Ol A Ol Ol Ol Ol A Ol Ol Ol Ol Ol Ol Ol Ol A Ol

I Os = 1 *ohtar* with sword (s) and spear (I) planted to his left
Ol = 1 *ohtar* with spear (l)
Rs = 1 *roquen* with sword (s)
A = 1 ohtar with a steel bow

borornaƨ would fight in a single *thangail*.

The *ðírnaith* served as the primary offensive formation. In it, each *roquen* arrayed his *ohtari* in a wedge behind him, and then took position at the spearhead of the *borornaƨ*. Beginning initially at a slow walk, then a trot, and then, finally, a run with the *ohtari* throwing their spears and closing in with *eketi,* the *ðírnaith* was a formidible foe.

***Dírnaith* Formation**

O
O H O
O O O O

H = *hîr* and his immediate followers and family (10-15 men)
O = 20-25 *ohtari* led by a *roquen* arranged as such

O R O
O O O O O O O
O O O O O O O O
O O O O O O O O

R = *roquen*
O = *ohtar*

The Army

There was no standing Gondorian *ðagorwaith* (S. "host"). It had to be mustered, organized and trained for each campaign (UT.291, 298). The king (or, later, the steward) called upon specific *hírath* to bring their *berenaiƨ* to the muster point, usually a fortress or haven which could protect the muster, and from which the campaign force could draw supplies (UT.291, RotK.43-44). These royal fortresses were defended by a *boronaƨ* mustered specifically for that duty (UT.306). Traditional mustering points developed: Osgiliath or Minas Tirith for campaigns to the north, and Pelargir or Umbar for southern campaigns (UT.291).

Usually 30-35 *berenaiƨ* were mustered for a campaign on or over the borders. The resulting *ðagorwaith* of 10,000-12,000 men was all that could be logistically supported in such sparsely-settled regions. For major campaigns with intensive logistical preparation, a force of 20,000-25,000 could be supplied. In the rich settled regions of interior Gondor during the Kin-strife, even larger war-hosts were mustered by both sides, though command and control of more than 50,000 men proved nearly impossible.

Once mustered, the *ðagorwaith* was commanded by a member of the royal (or steward's) household (UT.291, 297). The commander organized his force into a center (led by himself), a right wing (whose captain was the *ðagorwaith's* second-in-command), and a left wing (often captained by a prominent noble) (UT.292-293). Each captain flew a banner as a signal device and rallying point for his wing. The center usually held 1/2 to 2/3^{rds} of the muster, the remainder being split between the wings.

On the march, Gondorian commanders utilized scouts, who advanced ahead of the main body with units to improve roads, strengthen bridges and secure their rear and flanks (RotK.156-163). The entire force was expected to march, fully armed, 8 leagues (24 miles) per day (UT.279 n.9). This superior operational mobility allowed a Gondorian *ðagorwaith* to maneuver in order to block an enemy advance at a critical point or quickly threaten an enemy force.

Once the enemy force was engaged, Gondor preferred defensive battles anchored on terrain or fortifications (UT.293-294, RotK.163-169). Allied or mercenary units were usually placed between Gondorian units in the line of battle, while cavalry (often Northman or Southron units) were usually

assigned to the wings, though they often maneuvered separately to strike an engaged enemy force unexpectedly. Gondorian mounted units operated this way at the Fall of Fornost and the Battle of Celebrant. Each wing placed its *berenaiw* into two lines, sometimes a reserve with the center. The captain of the wing had several options:

Both lines in *thangail* (defensive):

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= = = = =
 = = = =
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Both lines in *∂írnaith* (offensive):

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^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
 ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
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First line in *∂írnaith,* second in *thangail* (offensive-defensive):

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^ ^ ^ ^ ^
= = = = =
```

First line in *thangail,* second in *∂írnaith* (defensive-offensive):

```
= = = = = =
 ^ ^ ^ ^ ^
```

Army formations were a combination of wing formations. An army in defensive formation:

```
= = =  = = = = =  = = =
= = =  = = = = =  = = =
```

An army in offensive formation:

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^ ^ ^  ^ ^ ^ ^ ^  ^ ^ ^
^ ^ ^  ^ ^ ^ ^ ^  ^ ^ ^
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An army defending its left, defending but prepared to attack in the center, and attacking on the right:

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= = =  = = = = =  ^ ^ ^
= = =  ^ ^ ^ ^ ^  ^ ^ ^
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Early on, Gondorian armies counted upon the superior size and strength of the Dúnedain, but eventually came to rely on superior armament, logistical arrangement and forcing battle on their terms.

Historical Development

During the time of the Pelargirean League, *berenaiw* were the personal followings of nobles who had escaped Númenor with the Faithful. In order to secure the continued service of these forces, the first kings of Gondor rewarded them with land-grants, making them *hírath* in return for their *boronaw'* service. These *hírath* were now able to reward followers with the use of land, leading to the rise of the *roqueni* as full-time warriors and retainers.

The Ship-kings saw continual offensive and defensive warfare that necessitated fortresses and regular campaigns beyond the settled areas of Gondor. This led to the royal host consisting of *berenaiw* called up for regular campaigns and fortress-duty (alternating with only one out of three mustered at a time). The stresses of these continuing northern campaigns and fortress duty saw the *1/3*rd rule constantly violated. This caused unrest among the southern *hírath,* contributing, in some part, to the Kin-strife.

After the Kin-strife and during the time of the ruling stewards, continuing border pressures led to the creation of a King's Corps (later, Steward's Corps) of mustered *berenaiw* and Territorial Corps of local hearth's *berenaiw* for local offense and defense. This system slowly lost ground, so that the only forces that the stewards could muster were their guards and those *berenaiw* close to the borders. *Berenaiw* on fortress duty settled in and near their fortresses, ceasing to rotate with other units. This time also saw the rise of mercenaries, both as individuals and as complete units and armies. It was just such a force that mustered at Minas Tirith, joined with the muster of Rohan, to fight the final battle of the War of the Ring at the Morannan (RotK.*43-44*, 159-169).

Acknowledgements: My thanks to Chris Seeman, for tracking me down and encouraging me to write this, to Brian Carlton, for sharing his ideas (I hope that this article sparks him to finish), and to Richard Abels and Nicholas Hooper, for their continuing work on a place JRRT knew and loved: Anglo-Saxon England.

ELDACAR MUST DIE!

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Thus scenario ui set in Gondor during the reign of Ctutamir the Usurper (TA 1437-1447). It id designed to be played by a group of politicaldissidents who hope for Castamir'd overthrow and the return to power of the rightful king, Eldacar. The adventure gives the PCs a chance to uncover and thwart a heinous plot to murder Eldacar. The catch id that, by embarking on a desperate journey to warn the exiled monarch of hid peril, they may end up leading the assassin straight to the kill!

Note: Many details in this adventure concerning the situation in Gondor under Castamir's rule have been derived from ICE's *Kin-strife* sourcebook, though it is not necessary to own that module in order to run it. Several of the names in *The Kin-strife* were devised without adequate attention to the rules of Sindartn and Quenya word-formation. An attempt has been made here to correct these errors. Consequently, the names appearing in this scenario may differ somewhat from those in the module.

In the Belly of the Beast

Unless the GM chooses to significantly alter the plotline, this adventure will only work for a very specific kind of group. As already noted, the story is written from the vantage point of opponents of Castamir. The scenario begins in the Gondorian haven of Pelargir, the very center of Castamir's power and support-base, and it is assumed that the PCs are natives or at least residents of that city.

Criticism of Castamir is almost non-existent in Pelargir. For the past two centuries, Castamir's family has brought power and prosperity to the haven's citizenry, and his usurpation of the winged crown promises an even brighter future. For this reason, the PCs' deadliest adversaries are their own fellow citizens, who regard any opposition to Castamir as a direct threat to their way of life.

Yet even in the most prosperous of societies, there are those who have experienced injustice at the hands of the ruling authorities, and these must band together for survival or perish. In Pelargir, dissidents have formed secret resistance movements, hoping ever for news of Eldacars return. Two such bands are the belligerent Horrid Scum and the mysterious Lam Dínen (the "Silent Voice"). At the outset of this adventure, the PCs should already be trusted members of one of these two movements.

The first group takes its name from a defamatory speech of Castamir directed against "those horrid scum that seek to aid the Northmen [referring to Eldacar and his supporters] and stir trouble within our noble kingdom." Fueled by the personal vendetta of its determined leader, a discharged veteran named Thorondir, the Scum wreak havoc on the Usurper's partisans by random acts of urban terrorism.

While Thorondir and his comrades are preoccupied with acts of tangible subversion, a different strategy dominates the designs of Carnendir, the ever secretive mind and will behind the Lam Dímen. A man of power and influence, Carnendir ought to be content with the *status quo*. But though he is a respected member of Pelargir's city council, Carnendir knows what it feels like to be an outsider among a nobility obsessed with racial purity. Carnendir's grandmother was of Southron ancestry, and although he himself has succeeded in evading the stigma of his mixed-blood, he has beheld the oppression of others less fortunate. His is a quiet resistance, a methodical gathering of knowledge that might someday be turned into a weapon against the Usurper.

Note: At the time when the *Kin-Strife* module is set(1441), the Lam Dímen and Horrid Scum are not even aware of each other's existence. By 1446. however, Thorondir and Carnendir's groups, have made contact, pooling their talents and resources. This development is assumed for convenience sake, so that participation in the adventure will not depend upon the PCs being members of one group rather than the other.

The Cornaran

Opponents of Castamir face persecution not only from their countrymen but also from the Usurper's spy network. Known as the Cornaran, the "King's Circle," Castamir created this organization to detect and suppress resistance to his regime. The labors of the Cornaran are concentrated in the northern regions of Gondor, where resentment towards the Usurper is greatest, but its headquarters is located in the heart of Pelargir, behind the unassailable walls of the Hall of the Faithful, the city's most revered structure.

The Cornaran operates under the leadership of Castamir's

trusted cousin, Caramir, whose cruelty in punishing dissidents is legendary. Tales of unlawful abduction and torture—deeds unbecoming of a Dúnadan—abound wherever his name is whispered. But Caramir has proven himself impervious to prosecution, clothing his wickedness under the pretext of protecting the person and patrimony of the king.

For some time now, Caramir has been aware of the existence (if not yet the true identities) of the Horrid Scum and Lam Dínen. One of his informants, a youth named Thindal, has succeeded in infiltrating the Horrid Scum. Caramir is also cognizant of an attempt by the resistance to reciprocate the gesture: one of their own number, a young man named Camren, has taken up service among the ranks of the King's Circle, but is unaware that Caramir knows of his true allegiance.

Thus far, Caramir has foregone any attempt to seize this traitor, hoping in the depths of his cunning to turn Camren's ignorance to the resistance's undoing. Caramir had not long to wait before his scheming would find meet employment for Camren and Thindal's charades. Early in the fall of 1446, his spies began gathering rumors that Eldacar was raising an army in Rhovanion, intent on reclaiming his kingdom.

The Return of Eldacar

For the majority of his nine-year reign, Castamir has paid little heed to Eldacar, whom he deems incapable of depriving him of his crown. But as opposition to the Usurper in the northern parts of the realm has shown itself intransigent, the king's disquiet at the thought of this elusive rival has grown.

Castamir commanded his cousin to deploy spies into the North, whispering promises of exorbitant rewards for any who might be willing to play the role of executioner. But to no avail. Eldacar's support among the Northmen was unanimous, and his Easterling neighbors were too few to pose a serious threat to the exiled king's security in Burh Widu, the stronghold of his mother's people. The efforts of the Cornaran were further frustrated by the considerable influence of Eldacar's partisans in Minas Anor and Osgiliath, who saw to it that many of Caramir's spies were never heard from again.

Fearing all-out revolt in Anórien or Ithilien (should the rumors of Eldacar's impending return be true), the Usurper and his conniving cousin have taken counsel with Dorvir, a fervent loyalist and trusted confidante, to ponder a solution to their situation: Eldacar must die if Castamir's regime is to be secure. But how to achieve this from within the walls of Pelargir, when all direct attempts in the North have come to naught?

To Kill a King

In the course of their secret deliberations, Castamir, Caramir and Dorvir were all in agreement on the following points:

- Eldacar is too well-guarded to succumb to the blade of a known enemy. Only an assassin believed to be a true supporter of the exiled monarch could get close enough to do the deed. Caramir's fifth columnist, Thindal, is an ideal candidate for this task, since the Pelargirean resistance already believes him to be at one with their cause.
- In order for Thindal to get to Eldacar, there must be a justifiable reason for his comrades to send (or more likely, accompany) him on a two hundred league journey from Pelargir to Burh Widu. This means that an urgent motivation for seeking out Eldacar must be fabricated.
- The revelation of an immanent threat to Eldacar's life would be the most obvious ploy. However, the nature of this threat must be such that the Pelargirean resistance will not simply relay the information on to other dissidents farther north: *they must bring the news themselves.*
- The only way to ensure that Thindal and his companions do this is if the threat shakes their confidence in the trustworthiness of their fellow dissidents. This could be achieved by insinuating that Eldacar's life is threatened by one of his own closest associates in Burh Widu — ideally, the person responsible for receiving and communicating to Eldacar news sent by his partisans in Gondor (so that simply passing on news of the threat by the normal channels would only put Eldacar — and themselves — in greater danger).
- From Thindal's investigations, it is known that Eldacar entrusts communications with his loyalists to Harith, a Southron prince fostered in the court of Eldacar's father, Valacar, before the outbreak of the Kin-strife. Harith willingly went into exile with Eldacar, but his connection to Haradwaith (a region traditionally supportive of Castamir's regime) provides an opening through which to impugn his integrity. Harith may be growing weary of his exile, or perhaps the bonds of familial loyalty have finally overcome his personal friendship with Eldacar.
- The most difficult obstacle to persuading Thindal's comrades of the truth of this illusory threat is the credibility of the *source* through which they are to discover it. Both the Horrid Scum and the Lam Dínen are long inured to Cornaran deception. Neither Carnendir nor Thorondir would have survived this long had they heeded every rumor that came to their ears, particularly when action based upon it might compromise the integrity of the resistance. Were Caramir to simply circulate this falsehood about the city, the dissidents would put no faith in it. The threat cannot be set before the resistance on a silver platter. They must believe that they have stumbled upon a closely-guarded secret. In order to exculpate the Cornaran of any machination, the plot's discovery must be occasioned by an incident incontrovertibly detrimental to Castamir's regime: something *real* must be sacrificed if Eldacar's supporters are to give credence to an illusion. The greater the sacrifice, the more potent the illusion.

The Plot

To kill Eldacar, Castamir is prepared to sacrifice much; to please his royal cousin, the fanatical Caramir is ready to sacrifice even ties of kinship. Caramir is wedded to Lothíriel, daughter of Lord Falasdor of the Eglerionath, a noble house of unimpeachable confederate (anti-Eldacar) sympathies. Falasdor, moreover, has long involved himself as a personal adviser to Caramir in the hunting down of many dissidents (which has earned him their bitterness). Now Falasdor is about

to render the ultimate service on behalf of his king: death and the blackening of his name as a secret supporter of Eldacar.

It is Caramir's intention to plant incriminating evidence about the alleged plot against Eldacar in Falasdor's bedchamber, and then to have Falasdor himself assassinated by a minion of Dorvir (who has many unscrupulous men at his beck and call). The murder of Caramir's father-in-law must naturally provoke a thorough investigation by the Cornaran, and to this most sensitive task Caramir will assign Camren (the dissident whom Caramir secretly knows has infiltrated the Cornaran).

When Camren discovers a partially destroyed letter—seemingly written in Falasdor's own hand—attempting to warn Eldacars partisans of a foul plot against their king, urgent questions will arise: Was Falasdor truly a secret dissident all this time (or perhaps a confederate who had a sudden change of heart) ? Did Falasdor, still believed to be a staunch supporter of Castamir, get wind of this malevolent scheme and so try to avert it by this letter? If this is all a ruse, why was Falasdor slain? Surely Caramir would not murder his own father-in-law!

The plotters assume that Camren's first imperative will be to inform the resistance of what he has discovered. The fragmentary character of the letter will necessitate further investigation. Falasdor's murderers must be found and their connection to the plot deciphered. In this search, Dorvir will play an obliging role, setting clues in their path in order to lead them on to a complete revelation of the plot as Caramir and friends have manufactured it.

This knowledge, hard-won, will then hopefully lead the dissidents (with the treacherous Thindal in their train) to undertake a journey to Rhovanion to thwart the plot and save Eldacar. Once in the exiled king's presence, Thindal will act, putting an end to the Usurper's troublesome rival. Such, at least, is the plan which Caramir, Dorvir and Castamir have devised.

Falasdor's Murder

The murder of Falasdor takes place late on the evening of 15 Urui (August 6th), 1446. Dorvir's assassins (led by Dorvir's own son, Carnion, bearing the forged letter) break into Falasdor's mansion disguised in the livery of the household guard, fend off his servants, and stab him to death in his bedchamber.

Falasdor's desk is arranged so as to appear as that he had been writing something at the time of his death. Carnion sets the letter in the fireplace, allowing it to be partially burnt, but leaving a few fragments lying inconspicuously in the ashes. He and his companions then set fire to the mansion (though not too thoroughly), using the flames as distraction to escape through the bedroom window, lowering themselves to the alleyway below and vanishing into the night (returning to Dorvir's domicile, the Castle of the Guard, in Pelargir's Middle Moat Town).

Starting the PCs

Note: "Camren" and "Thindal" merely designate *roles* that are essential to the scenario. If you already have a player whose character approximates one of these roles, go ahead and modify the story so that the PC takes center stage. If none of your players can comfortably fill camren or Thindal's shoes, they can just as easily be played as NPCs.

The precise point at which the PCs enter the action of the scenario depends on a number of factors. First and foremost, it is important to consider the nature of the plot. The discovery of the letter in Falasdor's room must not appear fortuitous or contrived. As soon as the PCs suspect that they are being "set-up," the plot has failed. Caramir is aware of this danger, and so (by means of Thindal) he will endeavor to make sure that members of the Horrid Scum and Lam Dínen are far from the Eglerionath mansion when the murder occurs.

On the other hand, it is equally important that Camren have an opportunity to search the scene of the crime before it is ransacked by the City Guard or other authorities. Also, it is not entirely credible that Caramir would willingly delegate the investigation of his father-in-law's murder to a mere field agent such as Camren. For these reasons, Caramir will arrange for Camren to be in the vicinity of Falasdor's mansion on some other errand when the deed is done, so that he will have a pretext to investigate immediately.

So, if Camren is run as a PC, his player must be allowed to discover the murder and investigate the crime scene. If Camren is an NPC, simply read through the description of the scene, assume that he found the letter, and have him arrange a secret meeting at the first opportunity with the other PCs to inform them of what he has found. In either case, only after Camren has performed his initial investigation should the rest of the PCs begin to take part in the action of the adventure.

The Scene of the Crime

Camren arrives on the scene (drawn by frantic cries of "Fire!") to find Lord Falasdor's steward, Borvellon, coordinating a bucket brigade of concerned citizens to quench the flames threatening the mansion. Once the danger has been averted, the distraught Borvellon may be questioned. (Camren has participated in Cornaran operations based at the Eglerionath mansion in the past, so his identity will already be known to the steward.)

With a morose, fatalistic glance, Borvellon gestures for Camren to follow him inside, remaining silent until he brings him to the door of his master's bedchamber. The entire room is spattered with blood. Falasdor's body lies on the bed, a dagger still planted in his chest, a piece of torn fabric tightly clenched in his dead hand. The window through which the murderer escaped is wide open, and the dying embers of the fireplace still glow dimly. Parchment from Falasdor's ransacked writing desk is scattered throughout the room.

Before Camren commences his investigation, a servant

interrupts them, announcing to Borvellon that the City Guard have arrived and call for him to give an account of what has happened. Borvellon excuses himself to see them, leaving Camren alone in the chamber for a few minutes.

The Murder Weapon

The dagger has a curved handle, fashioned in the shape of a falcon. Perception rolls reveal the following clues:

- Falasdor was killed by a dozen dagger thrusts *prior* to the burning, but does not appear to have been sleeping. (Ink stains on his right hand suggest that he had been writing at his desk when the assassin struck, falling back onto the bed as he struggled.)
- Before succumbing to his wounds, Falasdor tore off a piece of his attacker's clothing.
- The murderer was forced to escape quickly, as foot-prints on the lichen growing on the windowsill indicate. (A servant with a wounded arm can confirm this. Having heard his master's cries, he ran to face the murderer, but was unable to prevent his escape. Darkness shrouded the killer's physical appearance, so the servant is unable to give a description of him.)

The falcon-crest on the dagger that killed Falasdor will not be immediately identifiable. It is the device of the Mirvoronionath, a minor noble family of Pelargir whose lineage pre-dates Siriondil's dissolution of the Pelargirean League in TA *754*. The current head of this house. Lord Menelvir, is a reclusive aristocrat (though he maintains a sizable fleet under a different name).

In order to identify the falcon, the PCs may need to consult the lists of family crests preserved in the Hall of the Faithful (which is difficult to get access to, except for loremasters and Cornaran agents). Alternatively, they might inquire about it from a local weapon-seller or even the Metalsmiths' Guild.

Longstanding commercial rivals of the House of Eglerion, the Mirvoronionath might well benefit from Falasdor's death. However, outright murder of a man linked to the royal house (and to the head of the Cornaran no less!), leaving behind a clear token on the murder weapon, would be very a very dangerous — and sloppy — move on the part of Menelvir. Here are all the marks of a conspiracy, but who is the true culprit?

The Assassin's Silk

The fabric torn from Camion's garment turns out to be crimson silk of a very high quality. Silk is not indigenous to Gondor, but is imported from the South. Only the more exclusive clothiers of Pelargir might be able to identify its source.

The Burnt Letter

A search of the parchment and ransacked desk reveals only that Falasdor had recently been writing. However, none of the sheets have any writing on them, suggesting that the parchment in question was either hidden, stolen. ..or destroyed! A Perception roll directs Camren's attention to a still smoldering sheet of parchment in the fireplace.

Note: Shading indicates where severe or total damage to the text has occurred. The GM may choose to allow some of this to be deciphered, but the full text should not be readable—only enough of it to arouse the fears of Eldacar's supporters.

Interpreting the Letter

The GM must determine how much of this information the PCs already know. Decipherment of some of the references in the letter may necessitate consulting someone knowledgeable about the resistance. (Carnendir, head of the Lam Dínen, would be a good candidate.)

- **The Cabal**—a resistance movement in Minas Anor which the Cornaran has infiltrated. (See p. 23 below.) Caramir chose the Cabal as the recipient of the letter because one of its members (Ivrimir) is known to be in communication with Eldacar's spies.
- **Kóanoz—**an oasis-kingdom of Far Harad allied with Gondor. Its rulers have traditionally supported the policies of the Captain of Ships in Pelargir (Castamir's family), and its current monarch, Kóashûn, is a fervent partisan of the Usurper. His son, however, lived as a hostage in the court of King Valacar, befriended Eldacar and followed him into exile. This is Prince Harith. Kóashûn is known to be displeased with his son's actions. It is also known that Kóashûn is advancing in years, and is soon expected to name a successor. (The letter implies that Castamir will endorse Harith as the rightful heir to his father's kingdom if he kills Eldacar.)
- **Burh Widu**—the stronghold of Widuhrabn, King of Rhovanion and kinsman of Eldacar. Widuhrabn's great grandfather, Widugauja (in Westron spelled "Vidugavia"), established his rule over the Northmen more than two centuries ago. His dynasty has survived for so long by virtue of its alliance with the royal house of Gondor (which precipitated the Kin-strife through the marriage of Widugauja's daughter to Eldacar's father). It is generally (and rightly) believed in Gondor that Eldacar has lived out the years of his exile in Widuhrabn's halls. The Northman king has, however, provided his kinsman with a vigilant *mund* (household guard) to protect Eldacar from assassination attempts.
- **The Straight Man—**a mysterious figure of Pelargir's underworld, known to be a dealer in contraband, suspected by the Cornaran of abetting the resistance. His true identity is completely unknown. By signing the letter with this name, the conspirators have provided a convenient explanation for Falasdor's alleged double-life as a secret dissident. Since no one in Pelargir knows the Straight Man's true identity, there is no one to refute the letter's claim. It is a brilliant ploy, likely to deflect any suspicions the PCs may have about the letter's genuineness. (On the Straight Man's actual identity, see KS.48, 50.)

To the Cabal,

I have risked this letter only because our situation has become desperate and I know of none other in whom I can trust.

Our king's life has become endangered by the gravest of threats. The minions of Lord Dorvir have corrupted the heart of Prince Harith, our king's closest confidante, promising him the throne of Kóanoz in exchange for the head of Eldacar.

Three days ago, secret letters arrived from Burh Widu, indicating Harith's acceptance of the offer. At present this is known only to Dorvir and myself. He intends to advance himself in Usurper's favor by claiming credit for this foul plot, should it succeed.

Eldacar#s only hope lies in you. No message of warning will serve, for all news from Gondor passes through Harith's hands before reaching the king. You must go yourself, or find others to go in your place.

Whichever course of action you choose, it must be attempted swiftly or Gondor will have no champion to save her from the clutches of tyranny.

The Straight Man

Following the Leads

Identification of the crest of the murder weapon will naturally lead Caramir to demand an interview with Lord Menelvir. Since Camren is already involved in the case, Caramir will assign him to pursue the investigation until the murderers are found. Cornaran agents generally work alone (without supervision), but often call upon the aid of informants and other contacts in the course of a mission. This provides a convenient pretext for the involvement of the rest of the PCs in Camren's investigation.

From this point on, the role of Dorvir and his minions will essentially be to ensure that the PCs come to realize the ramifications of the letter and respond appropriately by setting out north to warn Eldacar of his peril. The PCs may manage this on the basis of the letter fragments alone. If they require further information, a series of encounters are available in Pelargir.

Menelvir's Interrogation

Regardless of the PCs' choice of action, Camren's first duty (once the dagger-crest has been identified) is to pay a visit to the house of Lord Menelvir to inquire about the dagger. As a matter of fact, this is a dead-end, because Menelvir is uninvolved in the plot. He will readily identify the dagger as his own. It was stolen from his mansion about a month ago (by one of Dorvir's henchmen) and all attempts to track down the thief have failed.

Menelvir is horrified at the news of Falasdor's death — for fear of being implicated, not out of any love for the departed— and is anxious to clear his name. He can, however, do little to aid Camren, since he knows nothing. In the days that follow, no one in Pelargir will step forward to exploit the dagger's connection to the Line of Mirvoron to accuse Menelvir of wrongdoing, so it should soon become apparent that the murder was not perpetrated in furtherance of aristocratic infighting. The dagger is a distraction.

Dorvir's Strategy

The principal architect of the plot to kill Eldacar is a man of many resources. A recent immigrant to Pelargir, Dorvir rose swiftly through the echelons of the king's favor to his current position as Warden of the Middle Moat Town. Residing in the old Castle of the Guard, Dorvir holds sway over a rather extensive swath of Gondor's greatest haven.

Ostensibly an urban reformer, Dorvir has eliminated virtually all crime from his ward of the city—only to monopolize it for himself! He is, in effect, a mob boss, maintaining a semblance of civic order by holding all men of violence in his pay. The Castle of the Guard is generally known to the residents of the Middle Moat Town as the source from which all corruption flows. But few complain, since many benefit from Dorvir's use of illegality to curry public favor (e.g., by reducing tariffs, protecting clients from harassment, tolerating contraband, etc.).

The long and short of it is that Dorvir has the power to influence the progress of the PCs' investigation, either positively or negatively, as he deems appropriate. Dorvir will, if necessary, lead the PCs to the doors of his very own house, where he will play his role to the hilt (providing more incriminating evidence of the plot for the PCs to discover).

Naturally, as with the murder scene itself, Dorvir will not make things easy for the PCs, lest they come to suspect they are being manipulated for someone else's purposes. There will be threats (both verbal and physical) against the PCs as they draw near to their quarry. Most of the citizens of the Middle Moat Town will hinder and disrupt their investigation if it threatens their patron in any way.

If the PCs seem to be straying from the trail, Dorvir may actually instruct his informants to circulate rumors connecting Falasdor's murder to Carnion, even allowing his son to wander about in public where the PCs may sight him so that a chase may be staged. This would only take place within the bounds of Dorvir's ward, however, where the odds of his son's getting captured by the PCs would be very low (since its inhabitants would be there to aid him).

In Search of Silk

Touring the clothiers of Pelargir in an effort to determine who might have worn the garment Falasdor tore in his death-throes may seem a rather far-fetched tactic, but it's a start. Here are a few possible establishments they might visit:

- **The Price of Elegance (Noble District)—**the finest clothing establishment in Pelargir, this boutique is actually run by a member of the Lam Dínen (a rather charismatic young Dúnadan lady named Ariel), and so is likely to be the PCs' first stop. When shown the silk, Ariel immediately notes its high quality. Though now out of fashion, the material used to be highly favored by the Mirvoronionath, the Sernionath, and certain members of the city's governing council (but that is a hopelessly broad category for purposes of tracking down an unknown killer).
- **The Proud Costume (Commercial District) —** customers of the Proud Costume are drawn mainly from the lower middle class. For exorbitant prices, one can procure clothing of only average quality. The proprietor, an aged Southron named Tûrak, happens to be one of Dorvir's privileged clients, and while he himself knows nothing about his patron's involvement in Falasdor's murder, Turak has been instructed to send word to Dorvir should Camren or anyone associated with him pay a visit. As for their query concerning crimson silk, Turak will be of little assistance. He works exclusively with jute, wool and—very seldom, for fortunate customers—flax. Not long after the PCs leave Turak's shop, Dorvir will send ruffians to shadow them. Like Turak, these thugs are ignorant of Falasdor's murder, but if the PCs detect, overcome and question them under duress, they may reveal that "Warden Dorvir" hired them to follow and spy on the PCs (why, they don't know).
- **Talathels Secondhand Clothing (Middle Moat Town)** —the elderly proprietress of this humble emporium is Talathel, a small, well-dressed woman with a sympathetic look. She is hard of hearing, which can cause some amusing misunderstandings ("You want to roll me a shoe, young man?" "Let's see, not that between us.") Very little

silk passes through her shop; but as a matter of fact, a "nice young man" (Carnion) sold her a crimson silk tunic only this morning. Regrettably, she cannot show the tunic to the PCs because it was purchased not long afterwards by one of her friends, Mírien the fortune-teller, who lives over by the Fiddler's Green. Talathel did not recognize Carnion when he pawned his damaged tunic off on her, but she does remember that the fabric had been torn.

- **The Art of Clothing (Port District)—**located near Lord Menelvir's house, this is the shop from which Carnion purchased the tunic he was wearing on the night of Falasdor's murder. Unfortunately, the proprietor, a bad-tempered man named Aglarin, will outright deny this if confronted with the torn silk. A die-hard confederate who regards Castamir as a saint, Aglarin still has no desire to entangle himself with the Cornaran, and will refuse to discuss the matter further. After Aglarin closes up shop that evening, he will frantically begin paging through his account books, searching for the record of his sale to Carnion (several months back). When he finds it, he will erase the record. (PCs suspicious of Aglarin's overly-paranoid denials might keep a watch on him and so witness his destruction of the record.) While Aglarin himself will not be forthcoming, the PCs might have better luck with one of his charming seamstresses (who feel no great loyalty for their employer, since he pays them very little for their work and treats them harshly). They remember Camion's visit to the shop earlier that year because Aglarin does not normally deal in silks and had to have it specially ordered.

The Fortune-teller

If the PCs, having visited Talathel's, decide to seek out her friend Mírien, they will have little difficulty locating her. Everyone living in the neighborhood of the Fiddler's Green (an open-air enclosure used for fairs and market-days in the Middle Moat Town) knows where the old fortune-teller lives.

Despite her name, Mírien is a woman of predominantly Daen ancestry. She ekes out a living for herself and her son, Aerthon, by peddling prophecies to the credulous. Always accommodating to guests of her small apartment (cramped with various arcana), Mírien is happy to answer questions, provided that the PCs agree —for a small fee—to allow her to read their fortunes (while the sprightly Aerthon attempts to picks their pockets).

If the PCs ask her about the tunic she purchased from Talathel earlier that day, Mírien plays along with feigned solemnity: "The tunic has great significance for your destiny. This I knew the moment I beheld it. That is why I purchased it, so that by it you might come to me to learn your destiny."

Following Danan Lin tradition, Mírien uses palm-reading and tarot cards to see the future. (At least, that is her claim. Whatever else she may be, Mírien is a perceptive listener, and is able to anticipate her clients' concerns with uncanny accuracy.) Mírien already knows that the tunic belonged to Carnion, the warden's son, because she saw him go into Talathel's shop. She knows nothing of Falasdor's murder (unless the PCs tell her about it), but she does know that Carnion lives in the Castle of the Guard.

Mírien's main interest is in persuading the PCs that she really is omniscient, so she will not explain *how* she knows about the tunic's previous owner. Instead, she will speak in obscure, allusive language about Carnion without ever naming him. For example:

- "He walks the streets of men, daggers of deception in his eyes, seeking what he has lost."
- "Walls of great strength conceal him, towers of majesty house his crimson pride."
- "He senses pursuit, the hounds on his trail. But he too is a hunter."
- "Counsel gives he and counsel takes, an emissary and an heir."

If the PCs press her for more specific information, Mírien sighs, claiming the rigors of prophesying have exhausted her for the day, and asks them to come back to her tomorrow, while she consults the spirit world. Once the PCs have left, Mírien sends Aerthon to the Castle of the Guard to inform Dorvir of her visitors (for which she expects payment). If Dorvir wishes, he may use Mírien to set up an encounter with Carnion. (When the PCs return the next day, Mírien will give them exact information about where the killer can be found and how he can be recognized.)

A Threat

If the PCs are dragging their feet and show no signs of departing Pelargir, Dorvir may enhance their sense of urgency by arranging for an anonymous letter to be delivered to them by someone they know. The message, written in a bold hand, says simply: "This is your one and only warning. Don't interfere with this business, or we will be forced to punish you." The bearer of the letter describes the person who gave it to them as a swarthy man with disheveled hair wearing black boots. If the PCs continue to inquire, Dorvir will arrange for his men to ambush and capture the PCs, leading them off (bound and blindfolded) to the dungeons beneath the Castle of the Guard.

The Castle of the Guard

The old Guard Castle of the Middle Moat Town was built in the Second Age. Its original purpose was to serve as a toll collection point for river traffic passing down the Sirith to Pelargir. As urban habitation spread beyond the ancient walls, advancing up the Sirith vale, the castle became an administrative seat for Pelargir s first suburb. This role continued after the building of Tarannon's Wall in the 8th century of the Third Age. At present, it houses a guard company and Dorvir's personal retinue.

Because it is a public place, the PCs may gain entrance to its premises openly, though they must offer a reasonable justification for seeking an audience with the warden. Dorvir is a busy man, and, if he wishes, can delay an audience indefinitely. Should Camren announce that he comes on Cornaran business, Dorvir will not refuse to meet with him (though he will naturally feign ignorance of any involvement in Falasdor's death). The warden will not permit Camren to search the castle unless he is able to produce an order from Caramir to that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

THE HOUSE OF

Councilor (M 76)

First Officer of the Visi (M 75b)

WARCRAFT

Foot Guard (M 75a)

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In two pursuits the Men of Far Harad deem themselves superior to all others of mortal race—trade and warfare. No one would contest the first of these claims. The merchants of Bozisha-Dar have penetrated every corner of Middle-earth with their wares, and few have evaded their powers of persuasion.

The second boast, concerning the art of war, is less universally accepted. And this is not to be marveled at, for the Bozishnarod possess no standing army, nor are their hearts stirred by dreams of conquest. Nonetheless, it is telling that none who doubt the martial excellence of the Haradrim have ever set foot in the House of Warcraft.

The great Southron city of Bozisha-Dar is governed by a council of seven regents. According to Bozishnara lore, this council received its mandate from an ancient tradition of royal rule. Part of the mantle inherited by the regents this legendary monarch are the Visi.

Once the palace guard of the Southron king, the Visi have become a private army devoted to the enforcement of the Council's will, acting under the auspices of one of the regent-councilors. Known as the "Warcrafter," the Lord of the Visi resides with this elite fighting force in the House of Warcraft, one of the seven mansions whose walls rear above the heights of the Katedrala, the fortified hill overlooking Bozisha-Dar beneath the merciless rays of the desert sun.

Entrance into the ranks of the Visi is a coveted honor that yearly draws eager candidates from the furthest reaches of Haradwaith. Few are admitted, for the rigorous trials of skill and endurance the initiate must undergo are intense. For those manful enough to pass these tests, a final challenge awaits: a bout of one-on-one combat with Padua Par, **First Officer of the Visi (M 75b).**

The goal of this ordeal is not to *beat* Padua Par—reputedly the greatest swordsman in southern Middle-earth — but to *withstand* his onslaught for at least a minute. (Many initiates do not last half that time.) There are no holds barred, and Padua Par will not hesitate to draw blood. Only under such absolute conditions, says Padua, can he read the heart of a man, and know whether he is truly fit to join this most exclusive of military brotherhoods.

The initiate's performance is not judged by Padua Par alone. The duel is conducted upon the grounds of the inner courtyard of the House of Warcraft, under the watchful eye of Klú Relortin, **Councilor (M 76)** and Lord of the Visi. Should the initiate be accepted, he will don the white surcoat of the Visi with the title of **Foot Guard (M 75a**). Only after long years of iron discipline and pitched battle-experience will he be considered for advancement to the rank of band leader or staff officer.

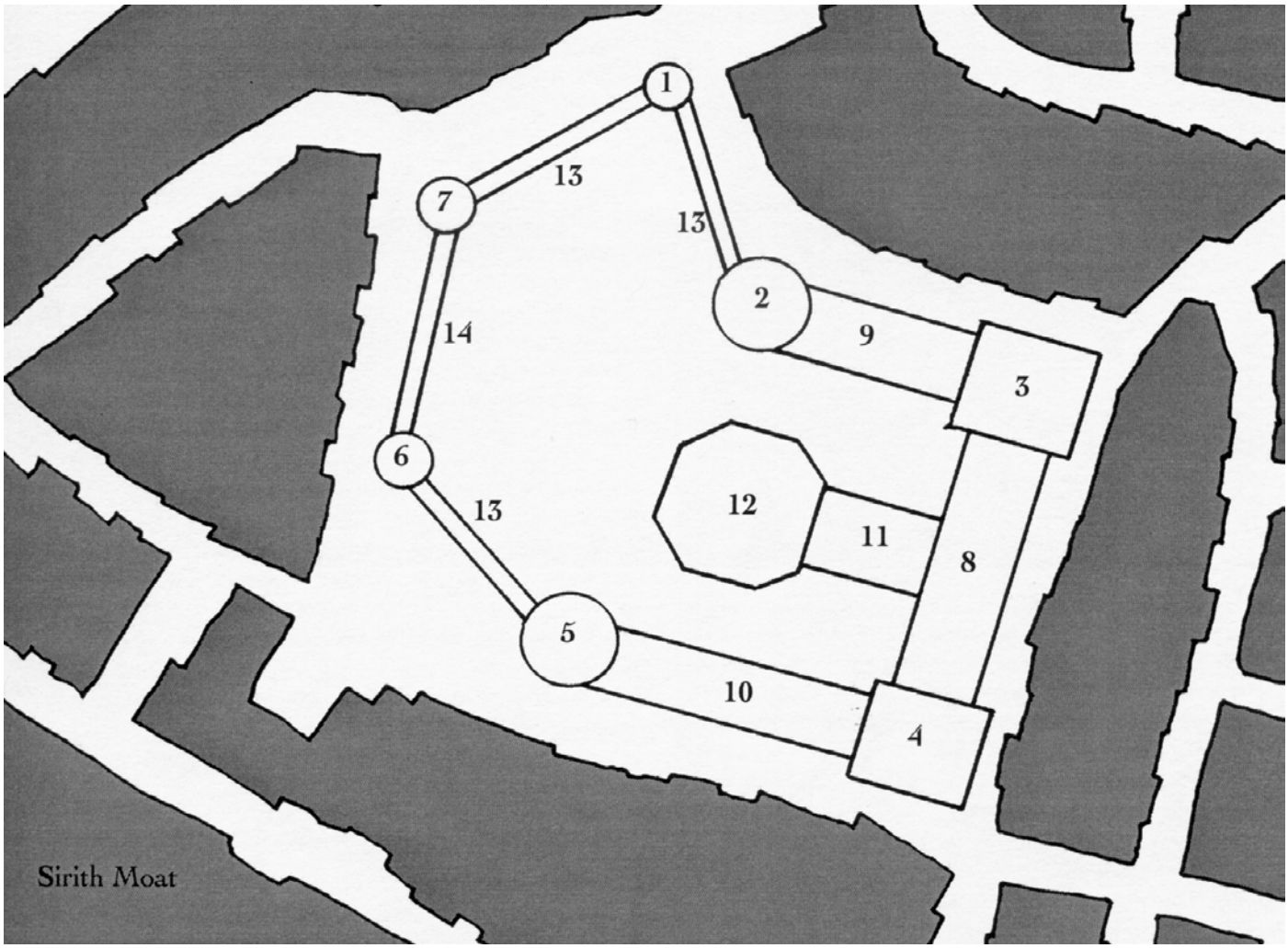
Such is the way of the Visi, and upon it alone the Bozishnarod make their boasts.

effect, and Caramir will require pretty strong evidence of Dorvir's wrongdoing before agreeing to this. (By the time Camren obtains his warrant, all incriminating evidence will have been removed from the castle.)

The other way to gain access to the castle is by stealth. Though guarded, it is not impossible to force an entry—especially if Dorvir is aware that the PCs are attempting this, in which case he will give strict orders to his men to slay no intruders. In fact, if given sufficient warning, Dorvir will reduce the size of his garrison so that the PCs will have a better chance of success: 40 guards, 30 servants and 6 thugs. (The normal complement is 80 guards, 30 servants and 60 ruffians).

The castle is an imposing fortress, comprising four towers and a keep, enclosed by a parapet. The main gate (#14) is a portcullis opening onto the courtyard. A secondary gate (locked oaken door) opens at #10. A secret escape tunnel runs from the basement of #1 to a hidden exit beyond Tarannon's Wall (where horses are kept ready at a farmstead owned by the warden), while another passageway runs from the castle dungeon to a point near the Moat Bridge.

1. **Circular Tower.** Manned by 4 guards. A spiral stone staircase, lit by torches, winds its way up to the parapet. The entrance to the escape tunnel is hidden. To open it, it is necessary to swivel a torch and push a certain stone on the wall. The passage is trapped with a deadfall (D Impact Critical) which causes the staircase to collapse, sealing off the passage. This trap is triggered by pressure on the surrounding stones.
2. **Stable Tower.** Accessed from a door opening onto the courtyard, the 1st floor serves as a stable for 20 horses, while the 2nd stores fodder. An attic holds additional food, tools and various objects.
3. **Guard Tower.** Manned by 5 guards (who can quickly alert their comrades in #8). The 1st floor contains a sizable armory with a chimney. The castle barracks occupy the 2nd and 3rd, comprising 6 chambers with a lounge and beds for 10 guards each.
4. **Ruffians' Quarters.** Same layout as #3 (with an audience chamber instead of an armory on the 1st floor). The basement contains a secret room where the warden's henchmen receive assignments from Carnion. Several subterranean passages from this chamber provide access to the sewers (so that Dorvir's men can come and go without detection).
5. **Library Tower.** Before entering the political arena, Dorvir had been a loremaster of some renown. When he received the castle as part of his wardenship, he moved the tools of his former trade to this tower. The 1st floor houses a library of several shelves (some of which showcase *objets d'art* extracted as "gifts" from Dorvir's many clients—fine clothing, precious jewels, illuminated manuscripts, marble statues, rare paintings by Gondor's most celebrated artists). A beautiful red carpet and two oaken tables complete the ensemble. Manned by 10 hand-picked guards, the tower's treasures are well-protected. All doors (one opening onto the courtyard, another leading to the parapet, and a third giving access to #10) are trapped by an extremely complex mechanism: the door knobs project needles coated with *jitsu*, a particularly virulent poison inflicting 1-50 points of damage. Automatic crossbows are concealed along the walls of every room (hidden behind the paintings). A staircase leads up to the 2nd floor (along the wall of the tower), where 10 luxurious bedrooms provide hospitality to the warden's most prestigious guests. Concealed behind one of the bookshelves (which swings outward on a hinge) is another stairwell winding down into the castle's dungeon (in line of sight of a crossbow). In the event of a threat, the tower's guards have standing orders to evacuate Dorvir's most prized possessions into the dungeon, whence they can access the escape tunnel to the Moat Bridge (trapped like the one in #1).
6. **Circular Tower.** Same as #1, but without secret passage.
7. **Circular Tower.** Same as #1, but without secret passage.
8. **Banquet Hall.** Manned by 3 guards, this dimly-lit hall is used for discreet audiences between the warden and his less reputable clients. An iron-reinforced door (hidden behind one of the many tapestries which line the wall and locked by a key which only Dorvir and his family possess copies of) accesses a stairwell leading to the dungeon. Galleries, adorned with statuary (including a smashed, moldering image of King Valacar), ring the 2nd and 3rd floors, looking down onto the hall.
9. **Servants' Quarters.** All three levels of this structure house the castle staff (the most esteemed occupying the 3rd floor). A gateway which once opened out onto the street here has been walled over and replaced with a kitchen and two pantries.
10. **Secondary Gate.** Manned by 2 guards and a porter. The entrance hall possesses no ostentation or luxury; just some pieces of furniture and a few paintings.
11. **Foyer.** A large, paved hall without much importance.
12. **The Keep.** The 1st floor contains two waiting rooms, a guard quarters (housing 10 men), a kitchen and an audience chamber (where the guards receive orders from their superiors). Two staircases winding up from this chamber access the 2nd floor, whose entire floor is of polished blue marble. This level contains very luxurious guest rooms, a waiting room (sporting an arms rack with swords, axes, crossbows and hammers) and a large dormitory for 10 elite guards. A sliding panel located in the waiting room allows direct access to the labyrinth of the 3rd floor (enabling these guards to intervene in the event that the warden is in peril). The 3rd level, forbidden to all (except, in an emergency, to the elite guards), is reserved for Dorvir and his family. In addition to living quarters, it contains a (heavily trapped) labyrinth of mirrors. Dorvir's personal chamber is lavishly adorned with a canopied bed, a mahogany desk and cupboard, and a statue of Calimehtar. A locked drawer in the desk (triggering a fire trap) conceals a number of documents, including a forged letter (ostensibly from Prince Harith) acknowledging acceptance of the warden's proposal that he murder Eldacar in exchange for the throne of Kóanoz. The letter insinuates that the agreement is known only to Dorvir and Harith. The statue of Calimehtar hides a revolving staircase, joining the escape tunnel in #1.
13. **Ramparts.** 25' high, 10' thick, manned by 10 guards (drawn primarily from #6 and #7). The stones overlap in



staggered rows so as to better resist the damage inflicted by projectiles.

14. Main Gate. Secured by a portcullis controlled from the guardrooms of #6 or #7.

Outcomes

If the PCs enter Dorvir's castle by force, searching for corroborative proof of a plot against Eldacar, there are four possible outcomes: 1) they fail, but manage to escape; 2) they fail and are captured; 3) they succeed in overwhelming the castle guard and capture or kill Dorvir; 4) they overwhelm the castle guard, but Dorvir manages to escape.

If Dorvir is aware of the PCs' intentions beforehand (which is likely), he will endeavor to prevent outcomes #1 and #3 from happening. Even if his men capture the PCs, a staged escape will eventually have to take place if they are to fulfill their unwitting role in the plot. For this reason, Dorvir is in constant, secret communication with Caramir, who can arrange a Cornaran raid on the castle if the PCs are in need of rescuing.

The Cornaran, however, should only get involved if Caramir can fabricate a plausible explanation for how he knew where the PCs were, otherwise the rescue may seem like a *deus ex machina,* which could be fatal to the credibility of the whole affair. (Perhaps another Cornaran agent has been secretly shadowing Camren's steps.)

The important thing is that the PCs find the evidence they need to convince themselves of the veracity of the letter found at the scene of Falasdor's death. This can be accomplished in two ways. If they succeed in penetrating Dorvir's private chambers (he can conveniently absent himself at the time), they may find the damning letter. This could also be accomplished after a Cornaran raid on the castle (in which case Dorvir and those in the know will have gotten away down one of the escape tunnels), but in this case Camren's challenge will be to locate the letter without his fellow agents learning of it.

The other method of conveying the deception is by the time-honored custom of the villain unwisely revealing his plans while gloating over captured PCs (or, alternately, offering them a parting shot like "You can do nothing to save your doomed king!" as Dorvir flees down one of his collapsing escape tunnels). An example of one possible capture scenario is described below.

Dorvir's men set up an ambush in an advantageous position (most favorably, the dungeons), where they shatter a large jar filled with *árunya* herbs in the PCs' midst, producing a toxic, sleep-inducing gas (7th level). The PCs awaken a few hours later to find themselves imprisoned in several cells under the watchful eyes of the guards with notched bows, all their belongings confiscated. Soon afterwards, Dorvir and Carnion enter the dungeon with a triumphant and scornful look.

"How do you find my hospitality?" Dorvir equires. "Charming, isn't it? I am an attentive host. I have had your last meal prepared in advance. Don't worry, it's not poisoned. Indeed, I am reserving a special fate for you. When I return, I will give you my full attention, and your bones will not rot quietly in the sun—if I have the kindness to gather your remains at all! You will have to ask me politely. I bid you a good end to your short lives. You shall not live to see the sunrise."

"A fine chase! Pity it will not avail to save Eldacar," adds Ccarnion as they take their leave of the PCs (while servants bring their last meal to their cells).

The guards remain to prevent the PCs for attempting any escape. The hours pass. If any of the PCs touches their food, they will begin to show signs of poisoning (despite Dorvir's assurance). It is a slow-acting toxin, taking several hours to take full effect, but is lethal (20th level). If the PCs are rescued in time, those who have been poisoned may obtain an antidote at the Houses of Healing in Pelargir—or perhaps not, if Caramir chooses to be cruel...

Aftermath

By this point in the adventure, the PCs should be convinced that Eldacar's life can only be saved if they journey to Rhovanion to warn him. Assuming none of them has ever been to Burh Widu before, they will first need to locate supporters of Eldacar in northern Gondor who can tell them how to find it (and which watch-words to use to prove they are not spies sent by Castamir). The most logical place to seek out fellow dissidents is in Minas Anor, since that is a known hotbed of pro-Eldacar sentiment (especially if they have correctly identified the addressee of Falasdor's letter as "the Cabal").

Before they depart Pelargir, however, the PCs may be forced to give an account of their role in recent events to the authorities. As a Cornaran agent, Camren must report to his superior regardless of how the affair with Dorvir pans out, and must offer justification to pursue the matter further. But if their raid on the Castle of the Guard has created a major disturbance (i.e., if the Cornaran was forced to intervene, and at all events if Dorvir was forced to flee the city as a suspected criminal), the PCs will be subject to a public inquiry.

The principal actor in any such investigation will be the king's younger son, Castarion, who, as Warden of the Haven, is responsible not only for maintaining public order in general, but also for the disposition of Pelargir's garrisons (of which Dorvir's Castle Guard company is one division). However, depending on the nature and gravity of the charges against Dorvir, Castarion may be preempted by his elder brother, Castaher (who represents a higher authority as Squire of the Haven). The king himself may even make an appearance at the tribunal, if circumstance dictates.

Since the Cornaran operates independently of Pelargir's civic administration—and in practice takes precedence over it — no public hearing will take place until Caramir has first privately interviewed Camren and any non-Cornaran PCs found to be collaborating with him. (At the GM's discretion, Castamir may take part in this interview as well, in order to lend extra weight to Caramir's words.)

Naturally, Caramir's main interest will be in what they now have to say about Falasdor's murder. It is at this juncture that the PCs must persuade Caramir that "royal justice has failed" and that the killer is still on the loose. (If Dorvir and Carnion have fled Pelargir, this will be an easy task.) Caramir, of course, is ready to believe any story they tell him (provided it is not *too* implausible), since his whole purpose is to send them north. To impress this upon them, Caramir may even accuse the PCs — certainly Camren — of failing to have displayed sufficient zeal in their investigation, allowing the murderers to escape.

However, once he has put the fear of prosecution in them, Caramir reassures the PCs that he will see to it that their pursuit is not delayed by a public inquiry. As chief of the Cornaran, Caramir wields many extraordinary legal (and not so legal) powers. One of these is the right to silence witnesses in a civic court if their testimony has a bearing on matters falling within the jurisdiction of the King's Circle.

By invoking this power, Caramir can prevent Castarion or Castaher from questioning or detaining the PCs. This means that the PCs will not be forced to remain in Pelargir for days (or even weeks) as the investigation of the "Castle Incident" is dragged out. They will, however, have to make a brief appearance at the opening of the tribunal so that they may be identified and discharged of their obligation. On the afternoon of the day following their court appearance, the PCs will be supplied with horses and provisions for their pursuit of Falasdor's murderer.

Note: If Camren has perished prior to this point (thus breaking the PCs' link to ihe authority of a Cornaran agent). Caramir will assign a new agent to lead the pursuit. Due to the other PCs' entanglement with the case, Caramir will compel them to continue rendering "assistance" to his investigator until the villains are brought to justice. This "replacement agent" will be entirely expendable In Caramir's eyes, since his only function is to facilitate the PCs' progress until they locate fellow partisans who can lead them to Eldacar (at which point they will probably dispatch their "leader"). Camren's replacement (unlike Thindal) would have no knowledge of Caramir's true intentions. He thinks he is merely on a straightforward mission to catch a criminal.

The Journey to Minas Anor

One week under a blue sky is all that is necessary to reach Minas Anor. The road will be crowded with merchants and peasants coming to sell their wares and produce at the city's harvest festival. From time to time, riders pass swiftly by. Some of these may be errand-riders of the king, returning to Pelargir with news that Dorvir was seen two days ago in the vicinity of Minas Arthor (a town on the road to Minas Anor), heading north.

The Tower of the Sun

While Pelargir basks in splendor and prosperity, Minas Anor broods under a cloud of oppression. Although its citizens steered a course of cautious neutrality during most of the Kin-strife, its Prince-president, Carmatar, finally threw in his lot with the confederates, which resulted in the siege and sack of Osgiliath and Eldacar's flight into exile. Despite this act, Minas Anor won little thanks from the Usurper.

Aware of his unpopularity in the North, Castamir realized that the City of Anárion held the key to his political survival. If Minas Anor were to come under the control of his enemies, all of northern Gondor would be lost to him. To prevent this from happening, the new king garrisoned the city with 3,000 loyal troops from Lebennin and Harondor and peopled its administration with stalwart supporters, deposing Carmatar and executing the Warden of the Keys.

Dissident feeling is pervasive. But unlike Pelargir, where the few active resistance movements can coordinate their activities, here Eldacar's sympathizers are isolated from one another by the fear of discovery. In Minas Anor, partisanship for the exiled king is treated with deadly seriousness and unrelenting persecution. For this reason, locating and winning the confidence of fellow dissidents may be more difficult than the PCs think.

A brief checklist of some of the individuals who might play a part in the PCs' adventures in Minas Anor follows:

- **Angir**—Prince-president (whom Castamir appointed to replace Carmatar). He is the highest authority in the city.
- **Baran**—one of the two current leaders of the dissident group called the Cabal.
- **Borondir—**Warden of the Keys (captain of Minas Anor's garrison).
- **Carmatar**—former Prince-president, now a kind of elder statesman, secretly the leader of the dissident group called Lasgalen.
- **Curunír**—the White Wizard (later known as Saruman), currently residing in Minas Anor to pursue his research in its libraries. Note that, although haughty at times, Curunír has not yet fallen into evil ways. In addition to being a source of arcane lore, he may be used to introduce PCs to influential people whom they might not otherwise have been able to contact on their own (Carmatar, Lady Mordúlin, Ivrimir, etc.).
- **Dior**—one of the two current leaders of the dissident group called the Cabal.
- **Hador—**keeper of the Old Guesthouse (where the PCs will be lodging), secretly a Cornaran informant and (temporarily) in the pay of Dorvir's wife, Híriel.
- **Híriel—**wife of Dorvir, who will be the PCs' principal adversary and *provocatrice* in Minas Anor.
- **Ivrimir**—a wool-merchant from Calenardhon, spy for Eldacar and member of the dissident group called the Cabal.
- **Malbeth**—master of the Houses of Healing.
- **Mordúlin**—one of the healers under Malbeth, secretly the leader of the dissident group called Nimloth.

Entering the City

A long file of tradesmen and travelers wishing to enter Minas Anor is queued up in front of the city gates. The guards, suspicious and intolerant of gate-crashers, insist on maintaining order, refusing access to some. However, since the PCs have come on Cornaran business, a brief display of their official papers will allow them to bypass the line. Guards escort them to the Old Guesthouse in the 1st circle of the city, where a hot meal, a good night's rest and favorable conditions for their mission await them.

Dorvir's Strategy

Dorvir entered Minas Anor, accompanied by Carnion and any hangers-on, two days before the PCs' arrival. (A letter from Caramir silenced any questions by the gate-guards.) There he took refuge in an apartment owned by Híriel, his wife (though her ownership of it is not public knowledge, so the PCs will not be able to locate it through inquiry). Carnion, meanwhile, went off to Cair Andros to solicit the aid of Nabat, captain of the Southron cavalry company responsible for patrolling Anórien's frontiers against Eldacar's supporters.

These Southrons are actually Kóanoze, and their captain is a cousin of Prince Harith. It is Dorvir's intention to utilize Nabat's men to strengthen the illusion that Harith plots to murder Eldacar. In reality, Nabat and all his company feel great enmity towards Harith, whom they regard as a traitor to his people. Once Carnion explains the deception to him, Nabat gladly lends him a division of his troops.

Carnion's plan is to send some of Nabat's men to Minas Anor to assist his father, while he awaits the PCs' attempt to cross the frontier into Rhovanion. When they do this, Carnion will stage an attack against them with his cavalry. This, he hopes, will solidify the belief in the PCs' minds that Harith truly has gone over to the Usurper's side. (Otherwise, why should his supposedly hostile kinsmen attempt to stop the PCs from reaching Burh Widu?)

But first the PCs must succeed in contacting dissidents who know the way and the watch-words to Eldacar's exile. Dorvir has two strategies for effecting this. The first is to leave the PCs unmolested in hopes that they will find the people they need on their own. The second option (more direct) is to force the PCs into the prison-city of Osgiliath, where they may be approached by Círdor, a Cornaran agent who is believed to be a genuine Eldacar supporter.

Reluctant to reveal himself (lest pursuit of him distract the PCs from their prime directive), Dorvir has entrusted all his machinations in Minas Anor to his wife, and it is with Híriel that the PCs will interact while they remain within the city walls. Of course, the PCs will not know that she is Dorvir's wife, since they have never seen her before. Wherever she goes, however, Nabat's men will not be far off.

Note: While Dorvir is in hiding, Híriel lodges at the house of Silifnin, a goldsmith who lives in the 2nd circle of the city (MT.48).

Deportation to Osgiliath?

Unwilling to wait for the PCs to stumble upon the right contacts, Híriel intends to try Dorvir's back-up plan first. In order to force the PCs into Osgiliath, she has bribed Hador to "misplace" their official papers (which, according to Cornaran procedure, are to be entrusted to the keeper of the Old Guesthouse for the duration of their stay) and then inform Borondir, captain of the city garrison, that they belong to a group of recently arrived recruits (secretly destined for duty in Osgiliath).

The morning after their arrival, the PCs are rudely awakened from their repose by one of Borondir's lieutenants, who checks off their names on a list and orders them to appear in the courtyard for immediate review by their new commander. Any resistance on the part of the PCs will be met with forcible apprehension by the lieutenant's enforcers.

If the PCs request that the lieutenant ask the housekeeper to produce proof of their immunity from harassment by city authorities, he will first ask them to confirm their names. As he re-checks his recruitment list, he looks up and answers with studied detachment: "There has been no mistake. You have been summoned for duty. The punishment for insubordination is severe."

Note: Obviously, no possibility of immediate escape is offered. If the PCs persist and attempt to fight their way out of the guesthouse, they will be facing an entire armed company of the city guard. Capture, followed by imprisonment and a military trial, is virtually certain. If this does happen, the verdict of their judge will be imprisonment in Osgiliath (thus achieving Híriel's purpose in their despite).

If compliant, the PCs are given only a few minutes to prepare themselves for inspection (under the watchful eye of the lieutenant's enforcers). Soon they find themselves standing at attention with a hundred other new recruits. Accompanied by his officers, Borondir proceeds to review the company. Having considered each one carefully, he delivers a brief speech, announcing that a third of their number, "in reward for their bravery," will have the honor of joining the garrison at Osgiliath at the express request of its commander, Lord Calimon.

Borondir's troop selection is arbitrary. (Arrange for one or two PCs to be chosen, and another to be named their lieutenant.) Departure for Osgiliath is scheduled to take place the next morning, so the PCs will have the rest of the day to rectify their situation, either by negotiating with Borondir or by fleeing the barracks by night (a deed which would brand them as deserters, a crime punishable by death).

The GM must decide how difficult it will be for the PCs to persuade Borondir that a mistake has been made regarding their identities. (Borondir will be cooperative with Dúnedain, but scornful towards other races.)

Hador will protest ignorance of any wrongdoing. If ordered, he will produce the PCs' papers, which, depending on how the GM wishes to handle the matter, may be intact or replaced (by Híriel) with false ones naming the PCs as recruits. If threatened with bodily harm, Hador will confess that he was bribed to misplace their papers by a beautiful young woman with red hair and brown eyes who did not reveal her name.

Note: While Borondir is addressing the recruits, secretly make a Hard (-10) Perception roll for each PC Those who succeed catch a fleeting glimpse at the entrance to the courtyard of a woman of some age, accompanied by two black cats and one white. As Borondir pronounces the PCs' assignment to Osgiliath, the woman gazes at them knowingly, and then disappears from view. Naturally, PCs will be unable to pursue her, since they have not yet been dismissed. If they try, they will be seized by enforcers and imprisoned for insubordination, (and then assigned to Osgiliath) There will be no trace of the woman after they have been dismissed.

It is obviously a fake lead, but make them believe exactly the opposite by allowing them to sight her at inopportune times (at night, in the Guesthouse, at the shop where they inquire, in the early morning). Inquiries among the citizenry of Minas Anor will reveal much speculation, but no certain facts. From her appearance, most assume this lady to be a virtuous woman of one ot the city's prestigious families The more superstitious may whisper fearfully of Berúthiel, a former queen of Condor, whose name was erased from the Book of the Kings for unknown reasons. Curunír, being a master of lore, can instruct the PCs about this further.

Even if their papers are missing, resourceful PCs may be able to devise some means of proving themselves to Borondir. If they succeed, Borondir releases them, in return asking only that they find the person responsible for this error (so that he can be properly punished by Angir). Locating the recruits with whom they have been confused would also be salutary.

Note: Should the PCs willingly leave for Osgiliath, do not intervene to save them. Instead, continue the adventure in Osgiliath. (See p. 24 below) They will perhaps return later to Minas Anor, if their search for dissidents in Osgiliath does not come to anything.

Searching for Dissidents

As residents of Pelargir, the PCs have only a vague knowledge of dissident groups of Minas Anor. There are three organized movements, each of a very different character.

- **Lasgalen**—an informal network of aristocratic opponents of the current regime. Led by Carmatar, the former Prince-president of Minas Anor, Lasgalen's members are

mainly interested in gathering tactical information about the strength and disposition of the Usurper's military forces in northern Gondor. As a member of the political class, Carmatar does not generally frequent the lower circles of the city, and unless one of the PCs is of noble extraction, it is unlikely that they will have an opportunity to encounter Lasgalen.

- **Nimloth**—a faction within the Houses of Healing dedicated to smuggling dissidents out of Castamir's reach. Led by the Lady Mordúlin (widow of Eldacar's slain son, Ornendil), the healers of Nimloth have allies in both Osgiliath and Minas Ithil.
- **The Cabal**—an ultra-secretive cadre of individuals lacking any clear objective. Through the connivance of Angir and Borondir, its ranks were infiltrated by the Cornaran five years ago, but without any noticeable effect on its activities. Its meetings are conducted under such a shroud of anonymity that its members know little or nothing about one another. In fact, many of its members are confederates masquerading as Eldacar supporters. Its leaders, Dior and Baran, though they themselves have no love for Castamir, hate one another implacably and are constantly at odds. (Baran secretly plots the imprisonment of his rival in an elaborately orchestrated incident, which he hopes will give him complete control over the Cabal.) In spite of this chaos, at least one member is a genuine partisan of Eldacar. His name is Ivrimir, and he has personal contact with Eldacar's spies. Ivrimir is actually something of a free agent these days (See note below.), and so it is more likely that the PCs will come into contact with him than with any other Cabal member.

Notes: It is possible to make use of the information about the Cabal contained in the scenario "Loyal to whom?" (KS. 157-161) with the following developments. In 1441, several members of the Cabal perished or disbanded: 1) Amlaith, its founding leader, died from a long disease (poisoning?); 2) Esteliel was tried and convicted of high treason, following a failed assassination attempt against Castamir; 3) Culcamalin was killed during a great dissident uprising; 4) Finrod was eliminated for his incompetence in dealing with the Cabal; 5) Esteldir, Ulrad and Anborn mysteriously disappeared in the king's jail, while other members left for other cities. Consequently, most of the Cabal's membership is now either confederate or politically neutral. Realizing the growing infiltration by Cornaran agents, Ivrimir has drawn much closer to Lasgalen.

The Cabal never meets in the same place twice (and often avoids the 1st circle altogether). Some places where the PCs can glean some assistance or information (others can be invented) include:

- **Diamond Market** (1st circle; MT.48) —an intense center of activity, where thieves are frequent.
- **Inn by the Gate** (1st circle; KS.159-160).
- **Faramir's Tailor Shop** (3rd circle; KS. 159).
- **Jerriad the Sharp** (3rd circle; MT.92-94).
- **Halls of Books** (5th circle; MT.112-115, KS.147) where Curunír often goes.
- **Houses of Healing** (6th circle; MT.118-121, KS.147, 151)—directed by Malbeth and Lady Mordúlin (who could be the mysterious "cat-woman"—droll, isn't it?).

In the end, there are only two men in Minas Anor who communicate frequently enough with Eldacar's spies to be of much use to the PCs: Ivrimir and Carmatar. Several days may pass before the PCs are able to locate and gain the confidence of either. These days thus undoubtedly will be devoted to locating supposed dissidents and arranging secret meetings with them (which can be very difficult, because they are both secretive and paranoid).

But it is not enough simply to make contact with Ivrimir or Carmatar. The PCs must also convince them of the plot against Eldacar (backing up their assertions with evidence) before Ivrimir or Carmatar will reveal to them the watch-words necessary to pass by the sentinels who guard the roads into Rhovanion. If they fail to persuade, the PCs will be brutally dismissed, without hope of return.

A Chase in the Night

Parallel to their investigation of the Cabal, it is probable that the PCs will continue to search for the mysterious woman who bribed Hador to get them press-ganged into the Osgiliath garrison. Although there is very little chance that Híriel will allow herself to be found, the PCs might run into Nabat's men if Híriel feels the PCs need additional "prompting" to leave Minas Anor.

This encounter could take the form of a direct, unprovoked attack on the PCs, or (more likely) Híriel might send the Southrons to hunt down one of the PCs' allies in the Cabal. She would arrange for this to take place at night, through the narrow streets, within earshot of the Old Guesthouse (so that the PCs would be drawn into the chase).

Note: Let the players make Perception rolls to determine which street the noise of feet and cries for help are coming from. They have only one or two rounds to prepare themselves (bow, sword, shield) if they want to come in time to help their comrade.

The PCs will sight their friend just as he is mounting the 45'-high city wall of the 2nd circle by means of a rope. Unfortunately, his pursuers also have ropes and are using them to climb after him. When the PCs reach the base of the wall, Nabat's men will already be half-way up (thus exposing them to missile-fire from the PCs if they choose to take pot-shots at them).

Without rope, attempts to climb are Absurd (-70), but if the PCs try to make use of the Southrons' ropes, Nabat's men will cut them before they reach the top (a deadly drop for the PCs). A safer way of catching up with the Southrons will be to reach the 2nd circle by the gate (Perception rolls required to re-locate the chase). In any event (cheat if necessary), the PCs should catch up with Híriel's minions before they kill the Cabal member (who by then will be in a desperate state).

As soon as they see the PCs, the swarthy, black-clad ruffians ignore their prey and attack them instead. They fight until death with a sanguinary aggressiveness. If the PCs succeed in defeating them, they may attempt to save their fallen comrade. Even though near death, he is allowed to reveal only basic information about himself (his name, the person who recruited him within the Cabal, etc.), but he will nevertheless recount the assault of these men, whom he calls "the Kóanoze." This name should immediately trigger associations in the PCs' minds with the plot against Eldacar, since the letter spoke of Harith and the throne of Kóanoz.

After the PCs encounter Nabat's men, Híriel will no longer harass them. She will remain hidden in Minas Anor with Dorvir until Carnion has fulfilled his part in the deception.

Getting to Rhovanion

There are two principal ways of reaching Rhovanion from Minas Anor. The most direct route from Anórien is to cross the Anduin at Osgiliath and then follow the Ithilien Road north to Dagorlad and beyond. The river could also be crossed by boat anywhere above Osgiliath, but the entire west bank of Anduin is vigorously patrolled by Kóanoze cavalry. Nor is Osgiliath without its complications: even Cornaran agents require special letters from a superior officer authorizing passage through the prison city.

The other major corridor into Rhovanion is by way of Calenardhon. Though longer, this road is initially less dangerous, passing west to Calvirien and thence north across the Fords of Onodló. However, above the Emyn Muil the Anduin can only be crossed at the Undeeps, both of which are heavily garrisoned. (It is easier to concoct a justification for crossing into Ithilien—which lies at least within the Usurper's realm—than crossing the frontier into "enemy territory.")

In short, the challenges of either route will depend heavily upon the PCs' "official" relationship to Castamir's regime at the time they depart from Minas Anor. If they are still operating on the basis of their original mandate from Caramir, they must renew that mandate in order to receive continued cooperation from the local authorities. If they have reciprocated Borondir's favor and solved the mystery of the missing recruits (See p. 22 above.), they may be able to persuade him to provide them with papers for passage through Osgiliath.

Osgiliath

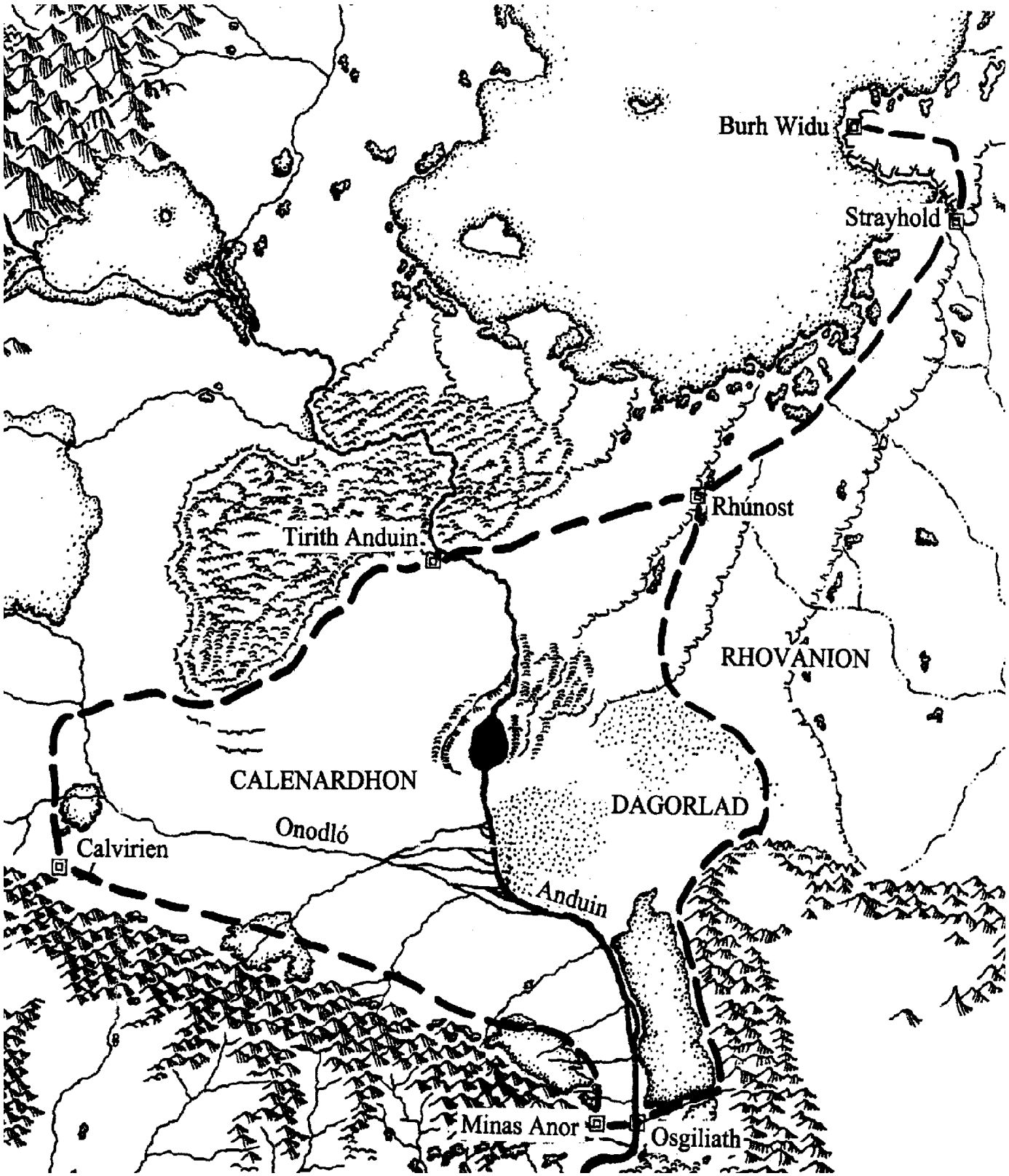
Castamir never repaired the damage he did to Osgiliath during the siege which resulted in Eldacar's exile. In fact, one of his first acts as king was to turn the once great city into a vast prison camp for the containment of his hateful subjects. Nonetheless, Osgiliath remains in name the capital of Gondor, and Castamir's young cousin, Calimon, exercises stewardship over it in the king's absence.

Calimon is an irresponsible leader, and within the walls of his domain he acts with impunity, flagrantly disregarding laws and ignoring any authority other than his own (unless it be that of Castamir himself). For this reason, passage through Osgiliath may be dangerous even if the PCs bear the necessary papers. If they offend him or if he finds them tedious, Calimon will have them unceremoniously stripped of their possessions and imprisoned in West Osgiliath.

If the PCs fall victim to Calimon's caprice, their only hope for escape is to seek help from their fellow prisoners. Promising points of departure include:

- **The Healers' Hall (Belthil, West Osgiliath)—**the healers of Gondor maintain a villa in West Osgiliath where they receive all who approach them for healing. The hall is directed by Lady Tarieth, daughter of Malbeth of Minas Anor. If the PCs are able to boast of Lady Mordúlin's trust and can convince her of their need, Tarieth may agree to hide them in a wain about to leave for Ithilien to gather herbs for the healers.
- **Círdor (Soronúmë, West Osgiliath)—**Círdor is a spy of Castamir, but poses as a dissident. He has been informed all about the PCs' true mission and will use his many contacts among the guards to help them reach Ithilien.
- **The Ethir Enclave (Helluin, East Osgiliath)** — a colony of folk from Ethir Anduin resides in East Osgiliath, not as prisoners, but as laborers in the service of Calimon and his officers (principally for building and repairing the city walls and fortifications). The imprisoned populace avoids this enclave, distrustful of anyone who would willingly dwell in the city of their oppression. Although unfriendly toward outsiders, some of the Ethir-folk may eventually approach the PCs. This is due to the fact that many in the colony adhere to the worship of Benish Armon, a cult of the Ethir with which Dorvir has many ties. If Carnion learns that the PCs have gotten themselves stuck in Osgiliath, he will exploit his father's ties with them in order to persuade them to assist the PCs' escape. (Of course, the Ethir-folk will not reveal their connection to Dorvir's family. Instead, they present themselves as allies of Eldacar.)

Note: Once out of Osgiliath, the journey along the Ithilien Road will proceed without event, unless you want to complicate matters with an attack of solitary wolves or an Orc-raid from the Ephel Dúath.



Ithilien Itinerary	
Minas Anor > Osgiliath	1 day
Osgiliath > Crossroads	1 day
Crossroads > Dagorlad	4 days
Dagorlad > Rhúnost	5 days
Rhunost > Strayhold	5 days
Strayhold > Burh Widu	3 days
Total:	**19 days**

Calenardhon Itinerary	
Minas Anor > Calvirien	10 days
Calvirien > Onodló	5 days
Onodló > Tirith Anduin	7 days
Tirith Anduin > Rhúnost	5 days
Rhunost > Strayhold	5 days
Strayhold > Burh Widu	3 days
Total:	**35 days**

Calenardhon

As the northernmost territory of Gondor, Calenardhon has always stood squarely within the camp of Eldacar. In order to maintain control over the region, Castamir occupied its strong points with heavy garrisons under the command of trusted followers. Almandur, his second cousin, governs Calenardhon from its capital of Calvirien through a combination of force, diplomacy and deception. Subordinate commanders hold the chief fortresses of the land: Finglong at Aglarond and Seronthor at Tirith Anduin. Angrenost alone remains, isolated, in the hands of Eldacar's beleaguered supporters.

In spite of its military occupation, many parts of Calenardhon are in open rebellion against the Usurper's forces, exploiting the region's topography of fold and fenmarch to wage a campaign of guerilla warfare. Spearheading this resistance is a mysterious figure known as the Green Asp. Responsible for the deaths of many of Almandur's soldiers, no one knows who this masked avenger is.

Because of his many problems and Calenardhon's great size, Almandur has a custom of inviting travelers to partake of his hospitality (so that he can gain news of distant events, as well as weed out potential spies trying to pass through his territory). So if the PCs choose the road through Calenardhon, they will inevitably encounter a troop of soldiers under Almandur's command who will request that they present themselves before the governor in Calvirien. Refusal is met with suspicion and possible detention.

Outwardly, Almandur is a charming host. His courtesy is likely to put PCs off their guard unless they are very careful. He will feign great interest in whatever they tell him. The governor will naturally want to know what brings them to Calenardhon (and whether they know anything about the Green Asp), but he will not press them for more than they are willing to reveal.

If they seem to warrant his suspicion, Almandur will send spies to shadow them when they leave Calvirien the following day. However, if Thindal approaches him privately and offers proof that he is a Cornaran agent on a secret mission, the governor will take no further action. (Perhaps Thindal, knowing Almandur's reputation as a poisoner, will ask him for some *jutb* and *ɬota* to use against Eldacar.)

Once past Calvirien, the PCs must somehow cross the Anduin. They cannot count on finding someone to ferry them across, since all traffic on the river is strictly monitored by Seronthor's garrisons at Tirith Anduin and Tirith Limlaith. The dearth of suitable timber along the river bank rules out the option of building a raft—at least if they hope to get horses across.

Crossing the Undeeps at one of the two fortresses, however, is equally problematic if the PCs lack the appropriate papers giving them permission to do so. An express letter to this effect from either Caramir or Almandur would certainly suffice, but unless the PCs are able to forge such a missive, they must somehow have convinced the governor or the Cornaran chief that they have a valid reason for entering enemy territory.

Carnion's Attack

Once the PCs have entered Rhovanion (sometime after they have crossed the Anduin or the Dagorlad, but before they reach Rhunost), Carnion will perform the final act of the deception, leading a charge of Kóanoze cavalry against them. Nabat has lent Carnion a company of 40 riders, but Carnion will not employ all of them at once, since his goal is not to destroy the PCs, but to convince them once and for all that Prince Harith is in league with Castamir. (The willingness of Harith's countrymen to attack the PCs is evidence of this.)

Carnion has divided his company into four squadrons, each scouring the empty lands in search of the PCs. Carnion has ordered two of these squadrons to ride within sight of Rhúnost—but not to engage its troops—so that Eldacar's frontier guards will be able to confirm the PCs' story that they are being pursued by enemies bent on the king's destruction. (Clearly, the Kóanoze have not come on a mere raiding expedition, since they are avoiding direct confrontations with the guard.)

Carnion will not hesitate to kill some of the PCs (the attack must be believable), but he will not endanger his own life. If things go badly for him, he will retreat at once. So long as he merely attempts an attack on the PCs, his task is done. He has no desire to die, though if cornered he will (like the Kóanoze) fight to the death.

Rhúnost

Rhúnost is the first in a line of Gondorian forts built by Eldacar's grandfather, Rómendacil II, to guard the Men Rhúnen, the East Road joining Gondor to Dorwinion. It now serves as Eldacar's southernmost outpost in Rhovanion, and it is here that all travelers are required to provide the correct watch-words to prove that they are friends. If they fail to do this, they will be hunted down and slain by one of Eldacar's mounted patrols (no questions asked).

When the PCs arrive and declare themselves as loyalists of Eldacar, they will be welcomed into the fort and escorted to its captain. Prince Aldamir (Eldacar's only surviving son). Aldamir will question the PCs closely concerning their identities and aims (ever wary of treachery). He will be particularly interested in their explanation for why the Kóanoze have pursued them so far north.

The prince is a perceptive man, and if the PCs lie to him or patently misrepresent themselves, they will need to make some sort of roll to persuade him (or perhaps the GM should roll to determine whether Aldamir sees through their deception). If he has reason to suspect any of them, he will give no indication of this, but will see to it that the suspect individuals are closely watched.

Whether or not they choose to reveal to him anything about Harith's alleged plot, Aldamir will provide them with fresh horses and an escort to guide them to Burh Widu (since it is Eldacar's law that all fugitives from Gondor be brought before him). If they do tell Aldamir of the plot, he will not appear

Note: If Aldamir gives credence to their tale, he will immediately send a trusted errand-rider to warn his father without the PCs' knowledge. Riding hard and without respite through a relay of horses, this rider will reach Burh Widu 48 hours later (nearly a week before the PCs). Having received the warning, Eldacar will take no action against Harith, but will devise ways of subtly testing his friend's loyalty (while taking precautions for his own safety). He will not confront Harith until the PCs arrive.

shocked — remember, he has been detecting and thwarting attempts upon his father's life for the past decade! —but will at once ask for concrete and convincing evidence.

The Journey to Burh Widu

On the morning after their arrival at Rhúnost, the PCs will continue north with an escort of 12 Northman warriors, following the Men Araw (Baumyagang) to the Shattered Step, where the town of Strayhold (Unsibyaburg) stands. From there they continue into the East Bight of Mirkwood,

Note: At this time, Strayhold has not yet become the truly "lawless" town of TA 1640. Instead, it is a refuge for Northmen guilty of manslaughter who would otherwise be liable to vengeance on the part of the kinsfolk of the slain. This is a long-standing institution of Northman society.

homeland of the Waldinga, the ruling Northman clan. All this region is thus "safe ground" for enemies of Castamir. Carnion will not attempt another attack.

A Conspiracy Unmasked?

What happens next depends largely on the PCs. Their Northman escort will lead them to the hall of King Widuhrabn (at whose doors they will be required to lay aside their weapons). The hall is long and dark, lit by the flickering embers of the hearth-fire. At its far end are set two thrones, above which hang the devices of the realms they represent: the horse and spear of the Waldinga and the white tree of Gondor.

Note: If Eldacar has already been informed of their arrival by Aldamir's errand-rider, Harith will not be present. If Eldacar knows nothing yet about the plot, Harith will be standing at his side when the PCs enter the hall.

Widuhrabn and Eldacar occupy their respective seats, side by side. Lining either wall stand 10 Northman warriors bearing the tokens of Widuhrabn's household guard.

Widuhrabn is the first to speak, welcoming them into his hall as allies of Eldacar (whom he addresses as "Winitharja"). Eldacar then bids them name themselves and speak of their journey.

If Harith's presence prevents the PCs from speaking openly of their purpose and they request a "private" audience with their king, Eldacar responds evenly: "Widuhrabn and Harith are my closest confidantes. What concerns me concerns them, and whatever I hear is for their ears also."

If the PCs openly accuse Harith of treachery (whether he is present or not), Eldacar answers: "Accusations of treachery are plentiful among those who come from Gondor these days. What proofs speak for you?"

If Eldacar has already received their warning from the errand-rider, it will be more difficult for the PCs to persuade the king of the plot (since he has had time to test Harith's loyalty and has found no evidence of treachery). Either way, the king will hear the PCs out—partly in order to discern any treachery on *their* part. If they appear to him to be innocent victims of a lie, he will be more open around them than if he has cause to suspect them of being active accomplices in the plot (thus providing Thindal a more favorable opportunity to strike).

Once he has listened to the PCs' story, Eldacar will call upon Harith to respond to the accusation. For his part, Harith swears an oath that he harbors no evil against Eldacar, his closest friend. Being an advisor of the king, Harith is well-versed in the methods employed by the Usurper to foment doubt and suspicion among Eldacar s supporters. If Eldacar trusts the PCs' innocence, so will he.

In the event that Eldacar believes the PCs, Harith will be put on trial. If condemned, a doom of banishment will be laid upon him and he will be driven out of Rhovanion. Consumed with a desire to clear his name and avenge himself on those who have wronged him, Harith will return secretly to Gondor and attempt to slay Castamir. (If Harith is tried and judged to be innocent, the PCs themselves will be put on trial on suspicion of collaboration with the Usurper. If found guilty, they will be executed.)

But assuming that Eldacar does not believe the plot and regards the PCs as unwitting tale-bearers, the PCs may yet persist in believing that Harith is bent on murdering their king and decide to take matters into their own hands, seeking an opportunity to eliminate him. Or they may realize they have been deceived and begin to wonder what was the point of it all. Meanwhile, Thindal will be seeking for an opportunity to murder the king, either by violence or by poison.

Outcomes

If all Thindal s efforts come to nothing and the PCs discover and thwart his assassination attempt, they will gain Eldacar's eternal gratitude and receive great honor in Burh Widu. In a few short months (early in the spring of 1447), Eldacar marches on Gondor at the head of a Northman army to reclaim his kingdom. If they wish, the PCs may ride at the king's side. If they survive that fateful conflict, the king will reward them with lands and titles. If, on the other hand, Thindal succeeds—even if he himself is slain—the future course of Gondorian history will be very different!

STATS

Pelargir Clothiers

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Tûrak	6	61	—	15	—	—	60da	—	0	Artisan
Ariel	4	48	—	10	—	—	40da	—	0	Artisan
Talathel	3	40	—	10	—	—	40da	—	0	Artisan
Algarin	6	90	—	20	—	—	92ss	72cb	0	Artisan

Pelargir Ruffians

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Thang	5	78	SL	40	Y (+5)	—	78bs	30da	5	War/Sc
Sulwen	5	69	—	15	—	—	65da	—	5	Scout
Balg	4	65	SL	30	Y	—	71ss	35sb	0	Scout
Drun	4	54	—	40	Y (+10)	—	60ba	41da	0	Scout
Cunnat	2	27	SL	20	—	—	35ss	25sb	0	Scout

Castle of the Guard

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Dorvir	10	125	RL	60	15	—	155bs*	75da	0	War/Mage

*+20 black sword (delivers additional A heat crit). 90 PP (x3 multiplier ring; knows all Mage lists). *Skills:* Spell Direction 125, Riding 85, Read Runes 105, Meditation 65, Swimming 68, Perception 110, Tactics 75, Use Magic Item 93.

Carnion	8	112	RL	30	—	—	92ss*	75cp	10	Scout

*coated with *ᛃilmúrë* or *ᛁóruth* (4th level, erodes nervous system in 1D20 rounds; -50 to –100 MovM). *Skills:* Ambush 4, Stalk/Hide 82, Perception 82, Survival 65

Elite Guard	7	82	Ch	40	Y	Y	110bs	90cb	5	Warrior
Sergeant	5	54	RL	35	Y	Y	85bs	50cb	5	Warrior
Ruffian	4	72	SL	20	—	—	72ss	58da*	5	Warrior

*poisoned. *Skills:* Ambush 2, Stalk/Hide 58.

Minas Anor

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Borondir	12	138	Ch	60	Y	Y	140bs	120lb	10	Warrior

Skills: Perception 120, Tracking 105, Stalk/Hide 128.

Captain	7	82	Ch	40	Y	Y	110bs	90cb	5	Warrior
Sergeant	5	54	RL	35	Y	Y	85bs	50cb	0	Warrior
Infantry	3	60	RL	30	Y	Y	60bs	44lb	0	Warrior
Híriel	8	78	—	10	—	—	55da	88cp	0	Artisan

Skills: Sword 78, Tracking 75, Ambush 2, Stalk/Hide 65, Perception 62, Survival 44.

Kóanoze	6	78	RL	35	Y	—	78	95	10	Warrior
Mordúlin	5	34	—	5	—	—	30da	—	0	Artisan

Skills: First Aid 90, Perception 55

Osgiliath

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Calimon	10	123	Ch	20	—	—	120bs	105ss	10	Warrior
Captain	7	82	Ch	40	Y	Y	110bs	90cb	5	Warrior
Sergeant	5	54	RL	35	Y	Y	85bs	50cb	0	Warrior
Infantry	3	60	RL	30	Y	Y	60bs	44lb	0	Warrior

Calenardhon

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Almandur	4	64	Ch	15	—	—	80bs	55sb	0	Warrior
Seronthor	13	130	17	50	Y (+10)	—	130sc	120cp	5	Warrior
Captain	7	82	Ch	40	Y	Y	110bs	90cb	5	Warrior
Sergeant	5	54	RL	35	Y	Y	85bs	50cb	0	Warrior
Infantry	3	60	RL	30	Y	Y	60bs	44lb	0	Warrior

Rhovanion

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Carnion	8	112	RL	30	—	—	92ss*	75cp	10	Scout

*coated with *ᚾilmírë* or *ᚢúruth* (4th level, erodes nervous system in 1D20 rounds; -50 to –100 MovM). *Skills:* Ambush 4, Stalk/Hide 82, Perception 82, Survival 65

Kóanoze	4	65	RL	20	Y	Y	80ml	60sc	0	Warrior
Harith	10	113	Ch	20	—	—	120bs	105cp	5	Warrior
Eldacar	31	173	Ch	30	—	Y	130ba	130cp	10	Warrior

PC Stats*

Name	Level	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	Gr	Melee OB	Missile OB	MovM	
Camren	6	113	20(RL)	30	—	—	92ss*	75cp	10	Scout

*longbow +10. 53 years old, 1m94, 94kg St 46, Ag 98, Co 92, Ig 63, It 96, Pr 75, Ap 61. *Skills:* 2HWeapon +22, , !H Conc Weapon –8, Pole Arm +22, Thrown Weapon +32, Climbing 58, Riding 63, Swimming, 63, Tracking 88, Ambush –1, Stalk/Hide 52, Pick Locks –25, Disram Traps 25, Read Runes 10, Use Object 25, Perception 72, History 20, Archery 40, Eloquence 35, Evaluation 20, Essence 0 Theurgie 15 Poison 25 Illness 25. *Languages:* Westron 5, Sindarin 4, Ehwathrumiska 4, *Spell Lists:* Révelation des Chemins, Nature law, Nature Aspects, Spiritual lenifiant

Thindal	5	97	10(SL)	35	Y	—	80ls*	83da	5	Scout

*+10 long sword. 29 years old. St 96, Ag 75, Co 85, Ig 68, It 50, Pr 90, Ap 70. *Skills:* 2H Weapon +35, 1H Conc Weapon +5, Pole Arm +5, Thrown Weapon –10, Climbing 35, Riding 50, Swimming 35, Tracking 35, Ambush 3, Stalk/Hide 60, Pick LOcks 30, Disarm Traps 35, Read runes 5, Use Object 5, Pedrception 50, Evaluation 20, Acrobatics 20, Games 35, Sailing 10, Eloquence 20, Local Geography 10, History 15, War Tactics 35. *Languages:* Westron 5, Ehwathrumiska 4, Haruze 3, Essence Theurgie JR 0, Poison Illness 20.

* Stats are provided here for Camren and Thindal, since they are essenttial to the plot as it has been designed. Other potential PCs are available at the "Archives" section of the OH website (http://otherhands.com).

DÚNADAN LONGEVITY

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The superhuman lifespan of the Dúnedain is (or should be) a matter of concern to both gamers and game designers. Players who have Dúnadan characters will naturally be interested in knowing how long those characters can expect to live. As for game designers, imagine the prof ound social, cultural and political consequences of a gene-pool which produces families in which multiple generations mature and coexist for decades or even centuries.

The MERP rulebook states that Dúnedain live 100-300 years. Though technically correct as an abstract figure, this range can be wildly misleading when applied to most Dúnedain living in the temporal settings traditionally favored by MERP. The aim of this brief article is to provide a set of guidelines for achieving greater precision and appropriateness in assigning lifespan limits to Dúnadan characters or societies.

The main difficulty in using a range as broad as 100-300 is that it is ahistorical. It ignores or sidesteps one of the most important features of Dúnadan longevity: its decline over the course of history. Tolkien used the theme of declining longevity to signify the gradual withdrawal of grace originally given to the Númenóreans. As they became preoccupied with the fear of Death and fell into wicked ways in their efforts to escape it, their lifespan lessened.

This element of Tolkien's mythology is well-known. What has not been clear in the past to students of the *legendarium* is the **rate** at which this decline advanced. Tolkien's annalistic "Line of Elros," published in 1980 in *Unfinished Tales*, provided royal birth and death dates for the Second Age rulers of Númenor, but the corresponding ruler lists for the realms of the Third Age in Appendix A of RotK give only death dates, not birth dates. Consequently, with few exceptions, we were in near total ignorance of royal (to say nothing of aristocratic or popular) Dúnadan longevity for the Third Age. This dearth of data necessarily hampered attempts to predict Dúnadan life expectancy for the principal MERP time settings.

It was not until 1996, with the publication of *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (HoMe XII), that it was discovered that Tolkien had, in fact, gone to great lengths to calculate royal longevity for the entire Third Age, including the lifespans of the Ruling Stewards and the Princes of Belfalas. Now, at last, we have enough information to postulate the life expectancy for Dúnedain for any time period.

But how are royal and non-royal longevity to be related, and what is the basis of this distinction? In the "Akallabêth," it is stated that the royal Line of Elros "had long life even according to the measure of the Numenoreans (Sil.261)." Christopher Tolkien records a note of his father which quantified this gap:

> The 'end of vigour' for the descendants of Elros came (before the waning of their life-span set in) about the four hundredth year, or somewhat earlier, whereas for those not of that line it came towards the two hundredth year, or somewhat later. (UT.224 n.1)

This non-royal limit of 200+ may be seen to correspond with Tolkien's statement in Appendix A that the Númenórean lifespan was "in the beginning thrice that of lesser Men (RotK.315)" if we assume that Tolkien conceived of ca. 80 as an average "natural" lifespan for humans.

If we represent the above-quoted passage by positing that non-royals have, on the average, 0.6 times the longevity of the Line of Elros, and if we assume that the longevity rate for non-royals declined more or less proportionally to that of the Elrosians, we can then use the royal lifespans detailed by Tolkien to extrapolate plausible life expectancy for Dúnedain at any period in history.

A related demographic matter that can be explored through knowledge of birth dates is the average marriage (or at least child-bearing) age for Dúnadan royals. Tolkien does not always provide complete data on this (since he is concerned mainly with the *succession* of rulers, not a list of *all* the children they engendered). Nevertheless, he tells us enough to make some informed observations. (This information appears on the insert sheets.)

The insert pages provide the complete data on which my calculations are based. The table that follows is a rough and ready summary, based on 100-year periods. To determine the life expectancy of a given non-royal, refer to the century in which that individual was born. Note that it is impossible to determine with certainty whether these figures should be treated as *average* or *maximum* life expectancies. This is up to the GM to decide.

One further note. It is often assumed that Elven blood boosts longevity. (The MERP rulebook suggests that "mortal" Half-elves should live 250-500 years.) An examination of the longevity table for the Line of Galador (the single reported instance of an Elf-Human union in Tolkien apart from the "big three") roundly refutes this notion, because Galador (whose mortal father, Imrazôr, took to wife the Silvan Elf Mithrellas) actually lived one year *less* than his father. Moreover, Galador's son, grandson and great-grandson al lived *longer* than him, though their Elven heritage was necessarily more diluted. As a whole, Galador's descendants evince no greater longevity than the House of Hador (the Ruling Stewards), which had no Elven blood.

Notes on the Insert Tables

† = lifespan unnaturally cut short, and is therefore an unsuitable basis for extrapolating non-royal longevity

Children—indicates years in which the person is known to have begotten a child (not necessarily for the first time). This gives us an idea of how old Dúnedain could be and yet still be able to engender children (though there is no way of knowing whether this approximates a *terminus ad quem;* also, all of the data tells us about males only) We don't know whether the women were substantially younger. However, the regularity of this age in many periods suggests rather strongly that it indicates the year of (or immediately after) marriage.

Non-royals—an abstract calculation based on the formula age of ruler x 0.6, rounded to the nearest five-year value. This may not always be a reliable indicator of Dúnadan lifespan. It does, however, give a reasonably plausible picture of the *rate* at which the blessing of supernatural longevity *declined* to "normal" human levels. A look at the lifespans of the two non-royal houses known (of Húrin and Galador respectively) shows quite clearly that at some point the mathematical consistency of gradual decline breaks down, subsiding into "random" natural longevity. On this model, the Dúnedain of Arthedain reached "normal" human lifespans by either TA 1200-1400 or TA 2200 (depending on whether you interpret the non-royal figures as averages or maximums). In Gondor the decline to normalcy was reached by TA 1700-1800. Note, though, that Hador, ruling steward of the 2200s, was the last man of Gondor recorded to have lived to the age of 150 (still unnaturally longeval).

Note on Faithful and Black Numenorean Longevity—Even though he died before his time, Elendil (a royal) lived more than a century longer than Tar-Palantir of Númenor, and if the 0.6 formula is applied to the Dúnedain of Gondor and Arnor, they would be living (initially) 20-50 years longer than the average Númenórean of the last centuries of the Second Age. Although the imprecision of my method has probably skewed reality somewhat, the conclusion nevertheless remains that the Faithful lived longer (or, more likely, declined slower) than the rest of the Númenóreans. At any rate, I would recommend calculating Black Númenórean longevity based on the Line of Elros rather than those of Isildur or Anárion. This means that by the time of Númenor's downfall, most pure-blooded Númenóreans did not live past 130 years. By the early centuries of the Third Age they probably (as with Umbar) declined to completely "natural" levels (i.e., living no more than a century).

Second Age	King's Men/Faithful
1-100	245 years
101-200	245 years
201-300	245 years
301-400	240 years
401-500	240 years
501-600	240 years
601-700	240 years
701-800	240 years
801-900	240 years
901-1000	240 years
1001-1100	240 years
1101-1200	240 years
1201-1300	240 years
1301-1400	240 years
1401-1500	240 years
1501-1600	240 years
1601-1700	240 years
1701-1800	240 years
1801-1900	240 years
1901-2000	240 years
2001-2100	240 years
2101-2200	235/235* years
2201-2300	220/225* years
2301-2400	210/220* years
2401-2500	200/210* years
2501-2600	185/205* years
2601-2700	170/195* years
2701-2800	145/190* years
2801-2900	135/180* years
2901-3000	130/175* years
3001-3100	130/165* years
3101-3200	120*/160* years
3201-3300	110*/160* years
3301-3400	100*7155* years

*=hypothetical

Third Age	Arnor/Gondor
1-100	150/160 years
101-200	150/160 years
201-300	140/160 years
301-400	140/160 years
401-500	115/160 years
501-600	135/155 years
601-700	130/155 years
701-800	130/150 years
801-900	130/150 years
901-1000	125/150 years
1001-1100	125/150 years
1101-1200	125/145 years
1201-1300	120/140 years
1301-1400	120/140 years
1401-1500	120/130 years
1501-1600	115/130 years
1601-1700	110/130 years
1701-1800	110/120 years
1801-1900	105/95 years
1901-2000	100/? years
2001-2100	100/? years
2101-2200	100/? years
2201-2300	95/> 150 years
2301-2400	95/? years
2401-2500	95/? years
2501-2600	95/? years
2610-2700	95/? years
2701-2800	95/? years
2801-2900	?/? years
2901-3000	?/? years
3001 [-3100]	?/? years

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LINE OF ELROS

Ruler	Lifespan	Children	Non-royals
Elros	500	119	300
Vardamir	410	131	245
Tar-Amandil	411	158	245
Tar-Elendil	401	171	240
Tar-Meneldur	399	157	240
Tar-Aldarion	375	173	225
Tar-Ancalimë	412	130	250
Tar-Anárion	401	171	240
Tar-Súrion	400	146	240
Tar-Telperien	411	154	245
Tar-Minastir	399	160	240
Tar-Ciryatan	401	166	240
Tar-Atanamir	421	186	250
Tar-Ancalimon	400	150	240
Tar-Telemmaitë	390	141	235
Tar-Vanimelde	360	129	215
Tar-Anducal	371	120	220
Tar-Alcarin	331	110	200
Tar-Calmacil	309	102	185
Tar-Ardamin	281	91	170
Ar-Adûnakhôr	253	89	150
Ar-Zimrathôn	235	78	140
Ar-Sakalthôr	226	84	135
Ar-Gimilzôr	217	75	130
Tar-Palantir	220	82	130
Tar-Miriel	202†		
Ar-Pharazôn	201†		

LINE OF ISILDUR

Ruler	Lifespan	Children	Non-royals
Elendil	322†	87, 100	
Isildur	232†	[...] 221	
Valandil	260	98	155
Eldacar	252	98	150
Arantar	250	95	150
Tarkil	235	92	140
Tarondor	230	90	140
Valandur	190	90	115
Elendur	225	88	135
Eärendur	221	86	130
Amlaith	220	85	130
Beleg	218	84	130
Mallor	215	84	130
Celepharn	212	83	130
Celebrindor	210	82	125
Malvegil	205	82	125
Argeleb I	130†	83	
Arveleg I	100†	82	
Araphor	198	82	120
Argeleb II	197	80	120
Arvegil	190	80	115
Arveleg II	180	78	110

Araval	180	78	110
Araphant	175	75	105
Arvedui	110†	74	
Aranarth	168	74	100
Arahael	165	72	100
Aranuir	163	72	100
Aravir	163	71	100
Aragorn I	100†	69	
Araglas	159	69	95
Arahad I	158	66	95
Aragost	157	66	95
Aravorn	157	66	95
Arahad II	156	65	95
Arassuil	156	65	95
Arathorn I	155	64	95
Argonui	155	63	95
Arador	110†	53	
Arathorn II	60†	58	
Aragorn	190*	88	

LINE OF ANÁRION

Ruler	**Lifespan**	**Children**	**Non-royals**
Elendil	322†	87, 100	
Anárion	221†	99	
Meneldil	280	81	170
Cemendur	279	90	170
Eärendil	267	88	160
Anardil	275	86	165
Ostoher	270	88	160
Rómendacil I	231†	87	
Turambar	270	83	160
Atanatar I	268	90	160
Siriondil	260	84	155
Falastur	259		155
Eärnil I	200†	84	
Ciryandil	195†	79	
Hyarmendacil I	250	78	150
Atanatar II	249	72	150
Narmacil I	245		150
Calmacil	246	68	150
Rómendacil II	240	68	145
Valacar	238	61	140
Eldacar	235	[...] 75	140
Castamir	188†		
Aldamir	210†	61	
Vinyarion	230	63	140
Minardil	180†	62	
Telemnar	120†		
Tarondor	221	55	130
Telumehtar	218	52	130
Narmacil II	172†	52	
Calimehtar	200	51	120
Ondoher	157†		
Eärnil II	160	45	95
Eärnur	122†		

LINE OF HÚRIN (RULING STEWARDS)

Steward	Lifespan	Children
Pelendur	119	40
Vorondil	110	41
Mardil	120	39
Eradan	117	38
Herion	111	37
Belegorn	130	50
Húrin I	120	[...] 41
Túrin I	113	[...] 80
Hador	150** (2200s)	45
Barahir	122	38
Dior	107	
Denethor I	102	[...] 35
Boromir	79†	39
Cirion	118	31
Hallas	125	35
Húrin II	113	30
Belecthor	110	31
Orodreth	109	24
Ecthelion I	98	
Egalmoth	117	29
Beren	108	45
Beregond	111	52
Belecthor II	120	30
Thorondir	100	33
Túrin II	99	40
Turgon	98	31
Ecthelion II	98	44
Denethor II	89†	53
Faramir	120	37

HOUSE OF GALADOR (DOL AMROTH)

Prince	Lifespan	Children
Imrazôr	126	54
Galador	125	56
2	131	60
3	134	52
4	127	53
5	123	49
6	126	50
7	134	49
8	125	45
9	122	45
10	119	42
11	118	41
12	114	42
13	113	39
14	106	44
15	75†	38
16	90†	37
17	113	39
18	114	42
Aglahad	105	39
Angelimir	111	51
Ardrahil	93	38
Imrahil	99	32
lphir	100	30
Alphros	98	